

S E R M O N S

ON

TEN Various SUBJECTS.



Printed by SAMUEL FAIRBANKS, in Coffin Lane.

MDCCCIII.

S E R M O N S



TEN Various SUBJECTS.

A
VOLUME
OF
SERMONS,
ON
TEN different SUBJECTS.

By *ISAAC PRIEST*,
PRESBITER of the CHURCH of ENGLAND.



BRISTOL:
Printed by SAMUEL FARLEY, in *Castle-Green*.

MDCC.LIII.

VOLUME
OF
SERMONS
ON

THE DIFFERENT SUBJECTS



BY ISAAC PEARCE
PRESBYTER OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND



PRINTED BY SAMUEL TAYLOR, in Castle-Street.

MDCCLIII

— x —

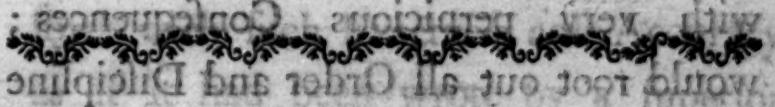


But, though I am a stranger to your
worthy Personage, I am not so to your
Works, which is, indeed, the only A-
RIGHT REVEREND FATHER in GOD,

F O H N,
By DIVINE Permission,

LORD BISHOP of BRISTOL,

These DISCOURSES are,
With the greatest RESPECT, HUMILITY and
VENERATION, dedicated.



to MY LORD,

✠ ✠ ✠ O have so venerable a Name
✠ ✠ ✠ T ✠ ✠ prefixed to so mean a Per-
✠ ✠ ✠ formance, may be looked up-
on as a Piece of Presumption in the
Author; especially, when considered,

vi ' D E D I C A T I O N .

that it comes from one whom you have not the least Knowledge of: But, though I am a Stranger to your worthy Personage, I am not so to your Works, which is, indeed, the only Apology I can make for this Address.

WE live, my LORD, in an Age wherein so many Sects and Heresies prevail, and there is such a general Stream of Corruption, both in Principles and Practice, that unless timely checked and regulated, 'twould introduce such a *Babel* of Confusion, as would be attended with very pernicious Consequences; would root out all Order and Discipline in the Church of G O D; and tend to the utter Extirpation of Christianity itself.

AND, if these plain Discourses should have any the least Tendency to a Regulation,

DEDICATION. vii

tion, I should be far from grudging my Time and Labour in composing them.

I HOPE, your LORDSHIP will find no Doctrines advanced here but what are agreeable to your own Sentiments ; and, therefore beg Leave to present them to your Patronage, as one that hath stood up, with the greatest Zeal, and Strength of Argument, in Defence of the Christian Religion.

AND though what I now humbly offer to your LORDSHIP, may not come forth with such Exactness and Accuracy as if it had been wrote by a superior Hand, yet whatever Defects there are in it, as the Thing is well designed, and a bright Genius is usually attended with Candour, I doubt not, but your LORDSHIP will make Allowances for these Defects,

viii DEDICATION.

Defects, and put a favourable Construction upon them.

I am,

My LORD,

Your LORDSHIP'S most Devoted,

Most Obedient, Humble Servant,

ISAAC PRIEST.

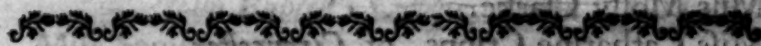
7. REGI





A

LIST of the NAMES OF THE SUBSCRIBERS.



A.



R. Edward Aldridge, of *Bisley*, 2 Vols.
The Rev. Mr. Apsey, Rector of *Ripple*,
Kent.

B.

Mr. Butler, of *Howcomb*.
The Rev. Mr. Baggot, Rector of *King's-Stanley*.
Mrs. Bennet, of *Stroud*.
Mrs. Browne, of *Pabenhill*.
Mr. Blackwell, of *Chalford*.
Mr. Samuel Burroughs, of *Gloucester*.
Mr. Richard Boteler, of *Eytham, Kent*.
The Rev. Mr. Bond, Minister of *Stroud*.

Mr.

Mr. Butler, of *Bisley*.

Mr. Matthias Baker.

The Rev. Mr. Barron, Rector of *Asterningham*,
Herefordshire.

C.

John Coxe, Esq; of *Lyppiat*.

Mrs. Coxe, of Ditto.

The Rev. Mr. Coxe, Rector of *N. Cerney*.

Charles Coxe, Esq; of *Kemble, Wilts*.

Mrs. Cotton.

The Rev. Mr. James Commeline.

Mrs. Clarke, of the *Hill, Herefordshire*.

Miss Jenny Clarke.

Miss Molly Clarke.

Miss Catharine Cripps, of *Cirencester*.

Mrs. Cook, of *Edgworth*, 2 Vols.

Mr. Clutterbuck, of *Aswening*.

Hawkins Chapman, Esq; of *Ashton Keins, Wilts*.

Mr. Clutterbuck of *Hyde*.

Mr. Clutterbuck, of *Bradford, Wilts*.

Mr. Clutterbuck, of *Bath*.

The Rev. Mr. Copson, Vicar of *Malmesbury, Wilts*.

Mr. Joseph Colborne, Apothecary, of *Stroud*.

Mr. James Clutterbuck, of *Stroud*.

Mr. John Colborne.

Mr. Richard Champion, Merchant, of *Bristol*.

Robert Cann, Esq; of *Aust*.

D.

The Rev. Mr. Duncan, Fellow of *St. John Baptist's College, Oxon*.

The

The Rev. Mr. Hayward, Vicar of *Froster*.
 Mr. Daniel Holbrow.
 Mr. Richard Harvey, of *Barfreston, Kent*.
 Mr. Hull, of *Waldershare, Kent*.
 Mr. Hopkins, of *Avening*.
 The Rev. Mr. Hackam, Rector of *Cherrington*.
 Mr. Hayward, Apothecary, of *Minchinhampton*.
 Mr. Hart, of *Stroud*.
 The Rev. Mr. Hornidge, of *Beverstone*.
 The Rev. Mr. Hewer, Vicar of *Kemble, Wilts*.
 Benjamin Hyett, Esq; of *Painswick*.
 Mr. Thomas Hancox.
 Mr. George Hawker, of *Stroud*.
 Nicholas Hyett, Esq; of *Gloucester*.
 Mr. Jayne, Sen. of *Bisley*.
 Mr. Jayne, Jun. of Ditto.
 Mrs. Jayne, of *Greys*.
 William Jones, Esq; of *Naas*.
 The Rev. Mr. Roynon Jones.
 The Rev. Mr. John Jones.
 The Rev. Mr. John James, Rector of *Bettishanger, Kent*.

K.

Nigel Kingscot, Esq; of *Kingscot*, 4 Vols.

L.

Mr. Leverfage.
 The Rev. Mr. John Longford, of *Harsfield*.
 The Rev. Mr. Longden, Rector of *Winstone*.

Mr.

M.

- Mr. Henry Mason, of *Bisley*.
 The Rev. Mr. Millechamp, Rector of *Coleborn*.
 The Rev. Mr. Morris, Fellow of *Jesús-College*,
Oxon.
 The Rev. Mr. Mills, Rector of *Miserdon*, 2 Vols.
 Mr. Daniel Mills, of Ditto.
 The Rev. Mr. Morgan, Vicar of *Walford*,
Herefordshire.
 The Rev. Mr. Minet, Rector of *Eyborne, Kent*.
 Mr. Musgrave, Fellow of *St. John Baptist's Col-*
lege, Oxon.
 The Rev. Mr. Meredith, of *Ballingham, Hereford*.
 Thomas Masters, Esq;

N.

- The Rev. Mr. Charles Neale, of *Harescomb*.
 The Rev. Mr. Nicholson, Fellow of *St. John*
Baptist's College, Oxon.
 The Rev. John Negus, D. D. Fellow of Ditto.

O.

P.

- Mr. Joseph Pinfold, of *Rodborough*.
 Thomas Pettit, Esq;
 The Rev. Mr. Philips, Vicar of *Bisley*, 4 Vols.
 Mr. Perks, of *Minchinhampton*.
 The Rev. Mr. John Priest, of *Henbury*.
 Mrs. Mary Priest, of *Cardiff*.

The

The Rev. Mr. John Price, of *Bristol*.

Mr. John Pontin, of *Bisley*.

Mr. Dean Paul, of *Stroud*.

Mr. Onesiphorus Paul, of *Woodchester*.

Q.

R.

The Rev. Mr. Rich, of *N. Cerney*.

The Rev. Mr. Ridler, Rector of *Edgworth*.

Mrs. Ridler.

Miss Anne Ridler.

Miss Barbara Ridler.

Mr. Rogers, of *Castwood*.

Mr. Rogers, Apothecary, of *Gloucester*, 2 Vols.

The Rev. Mr. Sayer Rudd, M. D.

The Rev. Mr. Abraham Joseph Rudd, Fellow
of *St. John Baptist's College, Oxon.*

Mr. Rodway, of *Avening*.

The Rev. Mr. Rayes, of *Westbury*.

S.

The Rev. Mr. John Sanford, Fellow of *All-
Soul's College, Oxon.*

Richard Smart, Esq; of *Greys*.

John Scudamore, Esq; 4 Vols.

Samuel Sheppard, Esq; of *Minchinhampton*, 4
Vols.

Mrs. Sheppard of Ditto, 4 Vols.

Mr. Edward Sheppard.

Mrs. Mary Sheppard.

Mr. Seldon, of *Waldershare, Kent*.

Mr.

Mr. John Sloper of *Tetbury*.
 Mrs. Seager of *Chavenage*.
 Miss Sheppard.
 Mr. Thomas Shurmer.
 The Rev. Mr. Shellard, Rector of *Rancomb*.
 The Rev. John Saunders, D. D. Fellow of St.
 John Baptist's College, Oxon. 4 Vols.
 The Rev. Mr. Charles Saunders, Fellow of *Ditto*.
 The Rev. John Spice, D. D. Fellow of *Ditto*.
 The Rev. Mr. Sheppard, Rector of *Minchin-*
 hampton.
 Mrs. Sheppard, of *Ditto*.
 John Sampson, Esq; of *Henbury*.
 The Rev. Mr. Seyer, of *Bristol*.
 Mr. Henry Stephens.
 Thomas Small, Esq;.
 Mrs. Ann Smyth, of *Henbury*.

T.

The Rev. Mr. Tournay of *Lincoln-College, Oxon.*
 The Rev. Mr. Tyndall, Rector of *Cotes*.

W.

The Rev. James Weedon, D. D. Fellow of St.
 John's College, Oxon.
 Mr. John Wade, of *Bristol*.
 Captain Watfon, of *Ditto*.
 The Rev. Mr. Wallington, Vicar of *Horsley*.
 Mr. James Winchcombe.
 Mr. Nathaniel Winchcombe, 2 Vols.
 Mr. Nicholas Webb, Wine-Merchant, in *Glou-*
 cester.

The

The Rev. Mr. John Webb.
 Mr. Nicholas Webb.
 Philip Westfaling, Esq;
 Mrs. Mary Westfaling.
 Mr. Wheales, Fellow of St. *John Baptist's Col-
 lege, Oxon.*
 Mr. Whitmore, of *Hyde.*
 The Rev. Mr. George Whitwick, 2 Vols.

X.

Y.

Mrs. Yates, of *Coulthorpe.*



7 DE 61

SERMON

S E R M O N I.

The NATURE and NECESSITY of true R E P E N T A N C E.

EZEKIEL xviii. 31, 32.

Cast away from you all your Transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new Heart, and a new Spirit: For why will ye die, O House of Israel?

For I have no Pleasure in the Death of him that dieth; saith the LORD GOD.

THERE cannot be a greater Enhancement and Aggravation of the Guilt of our Sins, than what ariseth from the Abuse of God's providential Care and Indulgence over us, express'd not only in the Agreeableness and Facility of those Laws which he hath instituted to our Obedience, but, moreover, in the favourable Methods he makes use of for our Conversion and Deliverance from those Penalties which we have justly merited by our Disobedience to them.

Had God, in the strict Severity of Justice, exacted our Obedience to such Laws as were not only attended with a great deal of Difficulty in the Performance of them, but had likewise guarded them

B

with

with so severe a Sanction, as to accept of no other Satisfaction for the Breach of them than the immediate Death and Execution of the Transgressor, the Dread and Apprehension of his Wrath, ready to be inflicted on us upon the Commission of the very first Offence, should have awed and terrified us into a Compliance: But when, instead of this, he hath, in his unspeakable Goodness, so suitably adapted his Institutions to the Interest and Abilities of Mankind, as to enjoin us nothing but what is in itself most easy and practicable; as well as advantageous and beneficial in its Consequence; and not only so, but when, in Despite of all these Encouragements, we impiously turn our Backs upon our Duty, yet even then, instead of a Judge to condemn us, he, like an affectionate and indulgent Father, strives with all the most endearing and pathetical Persuasions to call us home to himself, and expresseth the greatest Concern imaginable, that we should be so blind to our own Interest as not to be obedient to his Call, sets before us the dangerous and pernicious Consequences of such a Defection, and expostulateth with us in the most friendly Manner, why we are so resolutely bent upon our own Ruin, and force him, so contrary to his Inclinations, to inflict his Punishments upon us; yet if, after all, the sensible Experience of such an ineffable Love, we are not melted into the deepest Sorrow and Contrition for our Sins, but are still resolved to persist obstinately in our rebellions against him, then we are advanced to the highest and most desperate Degree of Wickedness that it is possible to arrive to, to such a Complication of Pride, Stubbornness,

bornness and Ingratitude, as will hardly admit of any Expiation for the Guilt of it, but shall be sure to be rewarded with a suitable Recompence.

An Account of which his gracious Dealing we have here very remarkably set forth to us in this Chapter, in his Controversy with the Children of *Israel*. At the Beginning of which, God, by the Mouth of his holy Prophet, maintains and vindicates his Justice against the unreasonable Complaints of some, concerning the Judgments that he had inflicted upon their Disobedience, as though they were hereby made to inherit the Punishment of their Fathers Sins, which is the Meaning of that allegorical Expression in the second Verse, grown so common in Use amongst them, even to a Proverb; *The Fathers have eaten four Grapes, and the Childrens Teeth are set on Edge*. They pretended 'twas very unjust in God to admit of such an Inequality in the penal Dispensations of his Providence, as to make them accountable for the Guilt of other Men's Actions, when they had been in no wise consenting or accessory to the Commission of them.

In Answer to this Objection (however he might be censured or accused of Injustice, in visiting the Iniquities of the Parents upon their innocent Posterity; yet) he asserts the Charge to be altogether groundless and unreasonable: *Behold, saith he, all Souls are mine; as the Soul of the Father, so also the Soul of the Son is mine*. As if he had said, The Son is as much related to me as the Father, in that they are both alike the Works of my Creation; and therefore may very

reasonably expect (unless he forfeiteth it by his own Perverseness) as great a Share in my Affections also.

God is not a Man, that he should be biased either by Humour or Prejudice to any unjust Proceedings in this Case, but always so strictly observeth the Rules of his own infinite and essential Justice, as neither to visit the Iniquities of the Fathers upon their Children, nor of the Children upon their Fathers; but both his Rewards and Punishments are impartially and uprightly dispensed, according to the Merits or Demerits of their own personal Actions.

Nay, so far was he from punishing them, as they blasphemously and impiously pretended, for the Transgressions of others, that he many Times suspended the Execution of his Judgments, when they were due to the Commission of their own.

'Tis true, he had visited them with some very sharp Afflictions, which yet, as they were most just, since they were no other than what were due to their own personal and inherent Wickedness; so they likewise proceeded from the most gracious Design, being intended by him, not so much for their Overthrow as Conversion.

If they did not work the most salutary Effects upon them, 'twas because of their own incorrigible Stubbornness and Impenitence: For he assureth them, for their Encouragement, that if the Wicked will but repent, and turn from all his Sins that he hath committed, and keep all his Statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, all his Transgressions that he hath committed shall never be so much as once mentioned to him;

him; but in his Righteousness that he hath done, he shall surely live. And therefore he earnestly presseth upon them this Exhortation in the Words of my Text; *Cast away from you all your Transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new Heart, and a new Spirit; for why will ye die, O House of Israel? For I have no Pleasure in the Death of him that dieth, saith the LORD GOD.*

In handling of which Subject, I shall invert the Order of the Text, and begin with the Assertion at the Close of it, wherein God declares his Unwillingness that we should perish; if we do, 'tis wholly owing to ourselves, he having indulged to us all possible Means to preserve and secure us from it.

Secondly, I shall demonstrate, that, notwithstanding all this, we ought not so far to presume upon his Goodness, as to make it an Encouragement to a wicked Life, since this will be no Security to such as obstinately persist in their Impieties, but they will be sure to end in their irreparable Ruin and Destruction. Thus much we may infer from the Expostulation, *Why will ye die?* Which plainly intimates, that Death will be the undoubted Punishment of their Sins, unless it be obviated by a timely and sincere Repentance.

Lastly, I shall endeavour to explain to you the Nature of this Repentance; it consists in casting away our Transgressions, and making us a new Heart, and a new Spirit.

The first Part of my Undertaking is to evince the Truth of the Assertion, wherein God declares

clares his Unwillingness that we should perish: If we do, it is wholly owing to ourselves, he having indulged to us all possible Means to preserve and secure us from it.

If any one should deny the Truth of this Proposition, I would ask him, If God were willing that we should perish, or took any Pleasure in the Destruction and Overthrow of the Wicked, what hindereth him from accomplishing this his Desire? I am sure he wants for neither Power nor Provocation to inflict the heaviest Punishments upon us.

There is nothing else that it can be imputed to but his extraordinary Lenity and Forbearance, whereby he, in an eminent Manner, verifieth the amiable Perfections of that Character which is most deservedly ascribed to him, *“The LORD GOD, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in Goodness and Truth: That doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men”*^b. No; but he makes Use of this as the last Extremity, when all gentler Methods fail. If we will not be wrought upon to Obedience by all the powerful Engagements of his Love, nor even to a ready and chearful Compliance with our Duty, then he will stand up so far in Vindication of his offended Justice, as to punish our ungrateful Abuse and Contempt of his Mercy, though he correct us in such a Measure as is infinitely below our Deserts; yea, he many Times turns his Wrath away, and will not suffer his whole Displeasure to arise. For he considers that we are but Dust; he considers the Frailties, the innumerable

^a Exod. xxxiv. 6.

^b Lam. iii. 33.

merable Frailties and Imbecillities of our Nature, and therefore makes suitable Allowances and Mitigations in the Punishments of those Sins which are occasioned by the Corruptions of it.

If they proceed from Ignorance, or Infirmary, or any such extenuating Circumstance, he is so merciful as to connive at such Miscarriages (tho' never so heinous in themselves) upon this Consideration, that Sins thus committed are involuntary, and consequently the more excusable. Or if they are heightened with such aggravating and crying Circumstances of Guilt, as to call down for the heaviest Strokes of the Divine Vengeance; and they exasperate him to such an Height, that he resolves upon our immediate Overthrow and Destruction; yet how willingly doth he reverse the fatal Decree, upon the least View or Prospect of our Amendment: To effect which, he omits no Opportunity, no Means that are requisite to work such a Reformation in our Minds, whether it be by the Mission of his Prophets, or by the repeated Calls and Invitations of his Spirit, by his Promises, his Exhortations, or Reproofs, and all this Variety of Methods, for no other Intention than only to make us sensible of our Errors, that we may be converted and live.

Thus we read, that, when God had fully determined to cut off the rebellious House of *Israel*, for their manifold and grievous Provocations; yet, before he would execute his Design, (that they might not want for sufficient Warning of their impendent Calamities) he commands the Prophet, saying, *Take thee a Roll of a Book,*

Book, and write therein all the Words that I have spoken to thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the Nations, from the Day I spake unto thee, from the Days of Josiah, even unto this Day. It may be, saith he, that the House of Judah will hear all the Evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every Man from his evil Way, that I may forgive their Iniquity and their Sin.

Here, you see, GOD looked upon the bare Possibility of their Repentance as a sufficient Reason for him to suspend the Execution of his Judgments, whilst his Mercy earnestly strove to mitigate the Severity of his Indignation, by bringing them to a lively Sense of, and Sorrow for their Sins, that so they might escape those Punishments that must otherwise have been executed upon them.

And again^d, with what compassionate Relentings was he moved, to hear the Cry of his People bewailing with Shame and Confusion of Face; the many sad and grievous Afflictions that their Sins had reduced them to under their State of Captivity! *I have surely, saith he, heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a Bullock unaccustomed to the Yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my GOD. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my Thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the Reproach of my Youth. And then he proceeds, Is Ephraim my dear Son? is he a pleasant Child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore*

^d Jer. xxxi. 18, 19, 20.

therefore my Bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have Mercy upon him, saith the LORD. Though he had chastised this People as his Enemies, yet they were no sooner touched with pious Repentments, and Detestation of their Ingratitude, but he began immediately to consider them as the peculiar Objects of his Love; and promisseth to reward their Contrition with the usual Favours and Blessings of his Providence.

Thus mild and gracious is he in all his judicial Procedures with Mankind; he doth not hastily inflict his Punishments upon the Wicked, but allows them Time to reflect upon, and consider of, their Actions, and of the perilous State and Condition they are reduced to; and when he doth afflict them, 'tis with so much Unwillingness and Regret, that he is easily prevailed with to withdraw his afflicting Hand; is as glad of an Opportunity to forgive, as they are to receive Forgiveness of their Offences, and will be sure to do so, whenever, out of an unfeigned Repentance and Humility, they request it of him.

This Truth we have confirmed to us by two very remarkable Instances in holy Scripture: The first we find, *2 Sam. xxiv. Chap.* where we read, that when *David*, out of a Principle of Pride and Ambition, had commanded *Joab*, the Captain of his Host, to take an exact Account of the Number of the People; God, to correct his Vanity, resolves to lessen the Number in which he had taken so much Pride and Confidence, by some very signal and remarkable Judgment.

In order hereunto, he offers him three Things, either seven Years Famine to come into his Land,

or

or to flee three Months before his Adversaries, while they pursued him; or that there should be three Days Pestilence in his Land. And so *David* being willing, out of his manifold Experience of the Divine Goodness, rather to resign himself up to God's own immediate Correction, than be exposed to the inveterate Malice and Persecution of his Enemies. *The LORD sent a Pestilence upon Israel, from the Morning even to the Time appointed; and there died of the People, from Dan even to Beerseba, seventy thousand Men.* And as the Angel was brandishing his pernicious Sword over *Jerusalem*, to destroy it, God stayed the Fury of his Hand.

Though the Provocation wherewith the King had provoked him, had exasperated him only to Thoughts and Resolutions of Revenge; yet when he saw the Destruction and Overthrow of so many Thousands of his peculiar People, he was instantly moved with Compassion; and earnestly desiring to have his offended Justice appeased and satisfied, without any more such violent Proceedings, he gives him a Command to rear an Altar in that Place, over which the destroying Angel had visibly appeared to them, in the Threshing-floor of *Araunah* the *Jebusite*. Which was no sooner executed, but we find it met with Success answerable to its Intention: For, as it is in the last Verse of the Chapter, *David built there an Altar unto the LORD, and offered Burnt-Offerings, and Peace-Offerings: So the LORD was intreated for the Land, and the Plague was stayed from Israel.*

Here

Here we have God's Mercy very remarkably and eminently discovered to us in the very Denunciation of his Judgments; for having propounded to the King three Sorts of Punishments, he leaves him to the Liberty of his Choice, which of these he would have to be inflicted on him. A Privilege this not very often allowed to Malefactors. Nay, and when upon his Request, God had taken the Execution thereof into his own Hand, and had begun to make Havock of the Lives of some of them, he became solicitous to have the Incurfions of his Fury prevented, and so gave Directions to the King how to atone for the Guilt of that Action, which had been the Occasion of those heavy Judgments that had already swept away a considerable Number of his Subjects, and had undoubtedly made greater Inroads amongst them, if the extraordinary and wonderful Kindness of Providence had not interposed and averted them.

Though God will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice; yet he delighteth in such a Sacrifice as is agreeable to his Mercy, and hath a direct Tendency to Peace and Reconciliation with him. And therefore he strictly enjoins the Delinquent to expiate for his Offence, by an Offering of Atonement upon his Altar, to prevent his falling a Sacrifice to his Revenge.

Another Instance of this Kind we have in the Case of the penitential *Ninevites*: Who when the Prophet *Jonah* had received Commission from God to denounce his heavy Judgments on their idolatrous City, how that it was not above forty Days, and *Nineveh* should be destroyed, it made
such

such an Impression upon the Minds of the Inhabitants, that they gave Orders for a general Fast to be proclaimed, and covered themselves with Sackcloth, from the greatest even to the least of them. And we shall find, in the Sequel of that Story, that they had no sooner poured out their mournful Accents of Grief, which they had conceived upon the Apprehension of those Calamities that had threatened their so sudden and universal Overthrow, but God heard their Cry, and perceiving in them all the Marks of a true Conversion, he repented of the Evil that he had said he would do unto them, and he did it not.

But *Jonah*, over much concerned for his Honour, and fearing lest God's not executing the Judgments that he had denounced should bring him under the Imputation of a false Prophet, he, in an angry and discontented Humour, went out unto the East-Side of the City, and there made him a Booth, and sat under it, waiting with great Impatience for the Event, to see whether God would put his Menaces in Execution, or no. But he had not been there long, ere God, in Pity to his Weakness, prepared a Gourd to spread over his Head, that with the pleasant refreshing Shade which it afforded, it might serve to cool the Heat of his Passion, which yet we find was rather increased than mitigated, by another Accident that befel him: For, as he was pleasing himself with the comfortable Shadow of the Gourd, God prepared a Worm on the next Morning, which eat into the Root thereof, that it withered. Upon which the Prophet takes Occasion to renew his Resentments,

ments, and earnestly wishing in himself to die; God mildly rebukes his froward Peevishness, asking him, Whether he did well to be angry; and telling him withal how much greater Reason he had to be tender of the Preservation of a City, wherein there were so many Thousands, whose very Ignorance did speak them innocent, and those that had been otherwise, were wrought upon to a true Repentance and Reformation, than he had of that short-lived insignificant Plant, which had been unexpectedly provided without, his Care or Pains-taking, although he had expressed so great a Concern in miserably repining for the Loss of it. *Then said the LORD, Thou hast had Pity on the Gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow, which sprang up in a Night, and perished in a Night: And should not I spare Nineveh, that great City, wherein there are more than sixscore thousand Persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left?* Strange amazing Instance of the Divine Goodness! No sooner were these People wrought upon by the Prophet's Preaching to an hearty Sorrow and Contrition for their Sins, but you see it put an immediate Stop to God's intended Severity against them; nay, their very Judge becomes their Advocate; he averts his Anger, and pathetically pleads for their Deliverance.

But why should I spend my Time in shewing you God's great and tender Concern for the securing of Man's Happiness and Salvation, by producing particular Instances for the Proof of it, when it is so plainly manifested in the general

ral Course of his Providence. The very End for which he created him was that he might be happy; and having made him capable of infinitely greater Happiness than any of his Fellow-Creatures upon Earth, he placed him in *Eden*, a Garden full of the richest Enjoyments and Delights, where, as long as he preserved his Innocence intire, he met with nothing either in the internal Frame and Constitution of his Nature, or from any external Accident, to untune the blessed Harmony of his Mind, or to hinder and interrupt the Enjoyment of that outward Variety of Pleasures wherewith Nature so liberally entertained him.

Nay, and afterwards, when the Guilt of Man's original Transgression had quite eclipsed the Light of his Felicity, and drew the dark Scene of Misery upon him; when, for his wilful Prevarication from his Obedience to that Law, that easy Injunction, which God had set him, he was not only excluded from the present Pleasures of an earthly, but was likewise stript of the Hopes and Expectation of a future and more perfect State of Happiness in a Celestial Paradise, exposed to all the Miseries that are incident to Human Nature, to Shame, Poverty, Distress, and Terror of Conscience, Pain, Sickness, and Death; and (for the Completion of all) made obnoxious to the everlasting Torments and Miseries of another World, to redeem lost Man, who, from his pristine State of Sovereignty and Bliss, had render'd himself at once the vilest and most miserable Part of the Creation, he offered no less a Purchase than the Blood of his most beloved
and

and only begotten Son (the least Drop of which was infinitely more precious than all the World) as a Ransome for his Deliverance, to rescue him from those Calamities, and restore him to a Capacity of that Happiness, that eternal Happiness and Salvation, which he had so highly forfeited by his Disobedience and Ingratitude.

And when after all that CHRIST hath done for us, though by the Merits of his Sufferings, we have obtained Remission of our Sins past, and are delivered from the Tyranny of that Death to which we lay so long enslaved and captivated, yet we are nevertheless altogether unable (as to any innate Power in ourselves) to keep ourselves from relapsing into the same accursed and miserable Condition, as we were to prevent our falling into it at the first, or to advance one Step towards that Happiness which is laid before us, having all our Faculties very much impaired and weakened by original Corruption; yet he hath promised to supply these our natural Defects and Inabilities with the supernatural Assistance of his Grace, which, if it meet with the Concurrence of our own Endeavours to improve and cultivate, will increase to such a Measure as shall be sufficient to carry us through the whole Course of our Duty, and advance us to the Fruition of that Happiness which we were originally designed for.

And although we are many times so ungratefully perverse, and unmindful both of our Duty and Interest, as to despise the Riches of that Grace, which would tend so effectually to procure the one, by exciting and enabling us to perform

form the other, yet he doth not immediately withdraw the Offers of his divine Assistance upon our first Slight or Abuse of it; but he patiently waits for our Conversion, useth all possible Motives and Encouragements to win us over to himself; and if he so successfully prevail as to do this, though we had impiously forsaken him and his Laws, which are most pure and equitable, to follow the Biass of our own sensual and vitious Inclinations; yet hath he so much Compassion upon our Return to him, as to run to meet us with open Arms, ready to embrace us with all the highest Impressions of Joy, the greatest Tenderness of Affection.

And to have the Party offended so willing to be reconciled, when we had given him so many just Occasions of Resentment by our sundry and grievous Provocations, enough one would think to have exasperated him into an irreconcilable Enmity against us, when he might, with perfect Justice, have made us feel the dire Effects of his Displeasure; yet even then to offer us the most friendly Overtures and Conditions of Peace, and earnestly solicit our Repentance and Reconciliation with him; What greater Instance can there possibly be of the compassionate Tenderness and Benignity of his Nature? What greater Argument of his Love? What greater Demonstration of his Willingness to promote our Interest and Security? Nothing more can be expressed or done that he hath not done for us; if we perish, 'tis (as the first Proposition asserts) wholly owing to ourselves, 'tis our own wilful Perverseness

ness and Obstinacy that is the sole Occasion of our Misery.

Vain then is the Doctrine of the *Predestinarians*, who endeavour to destroy the Liberty of the Will, and introduce a Kind of fatal Necessity of sinning; who setting Bounds to God's infinite Mercy and the universal Merits of CHRIST's Sufferings, will have it that God hath so absolutely and irreversibly decreed the future Punishment of the Wicked, that he never intended that either should have any saving Influence on their Deliverance from it, but as Vessels of his Wrath made and predestinated to be miserable; they are utterly excluded all those Means of Grace which he hath freely offered to the rest of Mankind, and consequently that, what evil Actions soever they incur, they are no other than what he very well foreknew, nay, determined should be done, as previously requisite to that Destruction which was intended for them.

A very severe and uncomfortable Doctrine, so highly inconsistent with Reason, and with the Nature and Attributes of God, that one would wonder how so many, that are orthodox and judicious in other Points, should ever engage in the Defence and Vindication of it. That God, who is all Love and Goodness, who will have all Men to be saved, and hath sworn that he hath no Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked, should yet make him the necessary Instrument of his own Destruction, is a Mystery which I must confess to be far above the Reach of my feeble and shallow Apprehensions.

"Tis true, he plainly foresees the Actions of wicked Men, he knows what a Scene of Guilt they shall run through before they arrive to the sad Catastrophe of Miseries, which is intended for the Punishment of their Sins: But then 'twould be very irrational to conclude, that this brings them under any Necessity of committing them, or that their Actions are ever the less voluntary, because he foreseeth them; this Prescience or Fore-knowledge lays no Manner of Constraint upon our Wills, which are altogether as free, as to the determining of our Actions, as if it had been possible for them not to have been fore-known or foreseen by God.

And this will be yet farther evident, if we consider the many Absurdities which must arise from the contrary Supposition.

For, *First*, this would quite take away the Morality of our Actions, which hath an entire Dependence upon the Liberty of the Will, nor have they any Thing of moral Good or Evil in them, and consequently are not capable of Reward or Punishment, any farther forth than as they are influenced by it.

For suppose I should do a Thing which is never so sinful or vitious in itself; yet if I do this in a necessary Way, I do not think that 'tis to be imputed to me as sinful; because I am only the Instrument of that Action; and therefore the Imputation of its Guilt is not to be charged upon me, but on some superior Agent, by whose Will and Direction 'twas performed.

So that to say God's foreseeing the Evil of our Actions lays us under a Necessity of committing

ting them, is in Effect to take the Odium of our Sins from off ourselves, and charging it directly upon God, making him not only accessary to, but the efficient Cause and Author of our Sins.

Besides, it reflects the highest Injustice upon God, in exacting the Punishment of them. For God to enjoin us the strictest Obedience to his Laws, to denounce, and at last to execute, his Judgments upon our Disobedience, when we were all this while under a Necessity of transgressing them, nay, and more, when 'twas he himself that laid this Necessity upon us, this would be such a rigorous Piece of Severity, as can hardly be supposed of the most cruel Potentate upon Earth, the most arbitrary and tyrannical Oppressor.

I don't say but a Man may by a judicial Impenitence be brought under a Kind of Necessity of sinning: He may be so far forsaken of the Grace and Influence of God's Spirit, and brought under the Power and Dominion of Sin, of his own sensual and brutish Appetites, as to be hereby rendered utterly unable to resist them: But yet whenever he is drawn away by their Importunity, 'tis not without the Consent and Approbation of his Will: If he be tempted to the Commission of any evil Action, his Will approves of it, and it is with a great deal of Delight and Pleasure that he performeth it.

Besides, the Inability to withstand their Temptations is what he bringeth upon himself: For certainly God would never deny any Man the Assistance of his Grace to vanquish what is so destructive of his Soul's eternal Interest, with-

out some very sore and grievous Provocation. It may be, when it hath been tendred to him, instead of improving it to the Fruit of good Works, he hath on the contrary turned his Grace into Wantonness; and then God, to punish his Abuse and Contempt of it, delivereth him up to his own Heart's Lusts, and so for want of the Assistance of the divine Grace to subdue his natural Corruptions, he is reduced to a Necessity of adding Sin to Sin, of falling from one Wickedness to another, 'till by a constant and habitual Course of Impiety he hath contracted such a heavy Load of Guilt upon himself as is enough to sink him into the lowest Abyss of Misery and Destruction.

And this may serve to open the Way towards the clearing the Difficulty of that Objection which the Adversaries of this Doctrine have made, and have such frequent Recourse to, as the main Support and Pillar of their Cause, and on which they lay the greatest Stress of their Arguments, I mean in the Instance of *Pharaoh*, whose Heart God is said to have hardned, which yet, if strictly searched and examined into, will, I believe, make but very little for their Purpose.

For, if we would come to the true Sense and Meaning of this Expression, wherein God is said to have hardned *Pharaoh's* Heart, we are to understand it as spoken, not in a positive, but a privative Acceptation, and that he is said to have hardned his Heart no otherwise than only as he withdrew from him the Assistance of his Grace, which alone could prevent his falling into such a State of Obduracy: And this we may suppose
was

was not till after many repeated Offers he had impiously slighted and rejected it. For without all Question he had once the Means of Grace and Salvation offered him so far as was consistent with an Heathen State, as other *Gentiles* had; and if you will but take the Pains to read over that tragical Account, you will quickly find that God had never threatned to deprive him of those Means by bringing him under the Curse of a final Dereliction and Impenitence, 'till he had been sufficiently provoked to do this by his ungrateful and malicious Usage of and Severity to his People, exacting of them such rigorous Servitude, that we are told, * *they sighed by Reason of the Bondage, and they cryed; and their Cry came up unto God.*

God therefore, to revenge the unjust Oppression of this cruel Tyrant, gives him over to a reprobate Mind, lets him go on in his own obstinate and stubborn Humour, till he at length arrived to such an Height of Infidelity as to disbelieve, and not be in the least influenced by that miraculous Change which *Moses* had effected, when he turned his Rod into a Serpent, and retransformed it into its usual Figure, with the rest of the Wonders he had wrought, and that by such an inimitable and peculiar Virtue as forced the very Magicians themselves to confess that they were no other than the Handy-work of God.

And I believe no one will deny that the Proceedings of Providence were very just, in that God suffered this proud rebellious Prince to be so far deluded by their Inchantments, which he

had

had set up in Opposition to the Truth of his Miracles, and to be held under such a strong Infatuation, as not to be convinced by the visible Effects of his divine Power, 'till he should feel it in his Judgments.

For how can any one expect that God should deal by him any otherwise, when like a sturdy contumacious Rebel, as he was, he holds it out in an unwearied and continual Opposition against him? His Spirit is not always to strive with Man. If we will be so perverse and obstinate as to endeavour all we can to stifle and resist his Motions, and frustrate whatsoever he intended for our Good, to set at Nought all his Councils, and all his Suggestions, and to offer continual Despite unto the Spirit of Grace, no Wonder if he withdraw his saving Influence from us, and leave us to our selves: For this is that great and unpardonable Sin which in the most emphatical Sense is said to be committed against him, that cancels and supercedes all Atonement, and to such as are guilty of it there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sins, but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation which shall devour the Adversaries.

And this leads me to the Second Part of my Undertaking, which is to demonstrate, that notwithstanding God's Unwillingness that we should perish, yet we ought not so far to presume upon his Goodness as to make it an Encouragement to a wicked Life, since this will be no Security to such as obstinately persist in their Impieties, but they will be sure to end in their irreparable Pain and Destruction. Thus much, I told you

we

we may infer from the Expostulation, *Why will ye die?* which plainly intimates that Death will be the undoubted Punishment of their Sins, unless it be obviated by a timely and sincere Repentance.

And who will ever doubt of the Truth of this, when he reflects upon the Heinousness and Aggravation of their Guilt who sin against so much Mercy as hath been already declared that God hath testified to Mankind, especially when they so far abuse his infinite Forbearance and Long-suffering as to make it an Encouragement to Sin, which should be the most powerful Argument to dissuade them from it.

If we consider him as a Being invested with full Power and Authority to inflict the heaviest Judgments upon such as live in an open Defiance and Opposition to his Laws, Fear should constrain us to Obedience: But since, as on the one Hand he is a great and terrible God, infinitely able to do us a Displeasure; so on the other he is our most kind and gracious Benefactor, one that is not only able but willing to do us all the Good that we are capable of receiving, and hath already shower'd down such innumerable Benefits upon us, yet after all we make him such ill Requitals as to refuse Obedience to his Commands, we act against an higher and more obligatory Principle, a Principle of Love, than which nothing hath a more prevailing Influence upon an ingenuous Mind, and such as will not be wrought upon and influenced by it, do hereby incur so much Baseness and Ingratitude, that as the Guilt thereof is unspeakable, so its Punishment will be certain and unavoidable.

For

For altho', as the Preacher observeth, *'Because Sentence against an evil Work is not executed speedily; therefore the Heart of the Sons of Men is fully set in them to do Evil;* and so they make the Mercies of GOD an Occasion of Security: Yet let them not flatter themselves too much with the Hopes and Confidence of their being secure.

What if GOD do suspend the Execution of his Judgments for a Time? Yet this is no Argument that they shall never be executed, as appears from what our Saviour himself plainly intimates to us in the Parable of the fruitless Fig-Tree, ^s where he telleth us that *a certain Man had a Fig-Tree planted in his Vineyard, and he came and sought Fruit thereon, and found none: Then said he unto the Dresser of his Vineyard, Behold, these three Years I come seeking Fruit on this Fig-Tree, and find none: Cut it down, why cumbereth it the Ground? And he answering, said unto him, LORD, let it alone this Year also, 'till I shall dig about it, and dung it; and if it bear Fruit, well: If not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.*

The Design of which Parable is to shew that, altho' GOD waiteth with a great deal of Patience upon the Sinner, being unwilling to cut him off, till he hath tried all possible Means to bring him to Repentance, yet if after all his Expedients to that End, he refuse to bring forth Fruits worthy of it, and still remain incorrigible, he is to look for no better Fate than what was denounced against the incurable Barrenness of the Fig-

^s *Ecclef. viii. 11.* ^s *St. Luke xiii. Chap.*

Fig-Tree, which, if it proved fruitless after all the Charge and Trouble that was bestowed upon it, was to be hewn down, and cast into the Fire. For as the Apostle tells us, ^a *The Earth which drinketh in the Rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth Herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth Blessing from GOD: But that which beareth Thorns and Briars, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose End is to be burned.*

If when God hath been using all his most earnest Endeavours to improve and cultivate us, in order to make us fruitful in good Works, we yield him no better Returns for his Care than the unprofitable Weeds of Vice and Immorality; if when he hath been so very compassionate, so kind, so merciful, as to make Use of all the gracious Methods he could invent to keep us from falling into that Destruction which we had most justly merited, we despise the Riches of his Goodness, making them but as so many Instruments to pamper us up to a greater Unruliness and Rebellion against him, this is putting too hard upon good Nature, and the ready Way to turn all the usual Sweetness of its Love into the bitterest and most irreconcilable Enmity.

Læsa patientia fit furor. Patience, when once thoroughly provok'd and exasperated, thinks of nothing but Revenge. And altho' God hath promised to pardon and forgive the Offences of all those that out of a true penitent Heart and lively Faith earnestly intreat it of him at the Throne of his Mercy, to hear and answer their Requests,

^a *Heb. vi. 7, 8.*

Requests, and to be fully reconciled to them, yet to such as refused to give an Ear to his repeated Calls and Invitations to Repentance, that have set at Nought all his Counsel, and would none of his Reproof; he hath threatned to laugh at their Calamity, and mock when their Fear cometh; when their Fear cometh as Desolation, and their Destruction as a Whirlwind; when Distress and Anguish cometh upon them, then shall they call upon him, but he will not answer; they shall seek him early, but they shall not find him: For that they hated Knowledge, and did not choose the Fear of the LORD.¹

In vain shall they lament and bewail the miserable State and Condition which they shall be then reduced to, when they shall behold an angry and incensed God, whose Patience they have so much abused and injured, coming in the Fire of his implacable Jealousy to execute his speedy Vengeance upon their Heads, and they shall not have the least Hopes or Possibility of an Escape, being utterly deprived of all those Means and Opportunities of Grace, which were once intended for, and, if they would, they might have improved to their Deliverance, but are now wholly out of the Reach of their Power, and shall serve for no other Use than only to rise up in Judgment against them, and to increase and aggravate their eternal Condemnation and Misery.

Then the most daring and stoutest Sinners of them all shall repent, tho' it be too late, when they see the fatal Consequence of their Sins, and in the most terrible Fright and Consternation at the

¹ *Prov. i. from the 24th to the 30th Verse.*

the Apprehension of their approaching Calamities, shall begin to call on the Mountains to fall upon them, and on the Hills to cover them; but these shall be but a very poor Refuge from the violent Storm and Tempest of his Fury, which will never cease, 'till it be accomplished in their irreparable Destruction.

Such shall be the Condition of all those who after the many repeated Warnings which God hath given them, shall at that Day be found negligent and unprepared; which Consideration may serve as the most prevailing Argument to quicken our Repentance: But before I shall much urge this upon your Practice, I shall, in the Discussion of the last Particular, endeavour to explain to you the Nature of this Duty; it consists in casting away our Transgressions, and making us a new Heart, and a new Spirit.

And *First*, we must, according to the Advice in my Text, cast away all our Transgressions. For Repentance, according to its usual Definition, is a turning from Sin to God. 'Tis not only a bare Sorrow for our Sins which have separated between God and us, but such a Sorrow as proceeds to a Resolution of forsaking whatever may be a Means to obstruct and hinder our Reconciliation with him.

Now the least unrepented Sin being sufficient to do this, and to keep us at perpetual Enmity with God, if therefore, we make any the least Reserve, if there be any one darling or beloved Sin that we are unwilling to part with for his Sake, 'tis manifest that we have a greater Regard and Friendship for it than for God.

But

But this is what he will never allow of, he will not suffer any Thing, especially what is so very repugnant to his Will, and contrary to the Purity of his Nature, to stand in Competition with him. And therefore we must abandon all its Interest, be it never so dear to us, or pleasing to our carnal and sensual Appetites, if they are otherwise to him whom we must make the principal Object of our Love, and consequently of our most entire and impartial Obedience.

But, *Secondly*, it is not sufficient that we abstain barely from the actual Commission of our Sins, but we must likewise abandon all Thoughts of, and Inclinations to them.

For, if we make a Shew of renouncing them in our Actions, when at the same Time we retain an inward Affection for them in our Minds, this is to deal very deceitfully with God, or rather will prove a miserable deceiving of ourselves.

For 'tis certain, God cannot be deceived, either upon this or any other Account; he is thoroughly acquainted with the most intimate Retirements of the Soul. He knows all its most secret Thoughts and Intentions, before ever they are executed, as well as our most visible and external Actions. And therefore, tho' we should refrain from the outward Acts of Impiety, yet if we entertain them in our Thoughts with any secret Pleasure or Delight, such a feigned and hypocritical Pretence of a Reformation will be altogether insufficient to procure Pardon and Forgiveness at God's Hands, or to gain Acceptance and Reconciliation with him.

If

If therefore we would compleat our Repentance so as to make it acceptable, it must be with a perfect Change and Renovation of the Heart. For this is the Source and Original of all our Actions, out of which proceed the Issues of Life, as the wise Man testifies, ^k and for this Reason adviseth us to keep it with all Diligence, as what hath the greatest Influence upon the due Regulation and Government of our Practice.

Now, if we have not done this, but have suffer'd it thro' Inadvertency to be deprav'd and vitiated by the Pollutions of Sin, it must be our very earnest Care and Endeavour to cleanse and purify it, to purge this Fountain from all its corrupt and sinful Dispositions; otherwise our Actions, which are as so many Streams issuing from it, must necessarily be tainted with its Impurity.

To which End we must earnestly implore the Aid and Assistance of God's Grace, that where our Heart hath been inclined to any Evil, he may hereby enable us to turn and regulate its Propensions, bend all its Inclinations and Desires quite contrary to their usual Tendency, 'till we become altogether as zealous for good Works, as we have been for the Practice of Evil, and as industrious in the Performance of the divine Will, as ever we were in the Accomplishment and Gratification of our own.

And this we shall certainly be, if this inward Change be thoroughly and effectually wrought in us. We shall not only *cease to do evil, but learn*

^k Prov. iv. 23.

learn to do well, not only bid adieu to those Sins which we find ourselves upon a strict Examination to have been formerly guilty of, but likewise testify our inward Abhorrence and Detestation of them by the assiduous Exercise of their contrary Virtues.

This is the surest, and indeed the only Testimony we can give of the Truth and Sincerity of our Repentance. For, as the learned *Kettlewell* observes, 'Nothing less than a good Life will be allowed, either by God or Man, for a sufficient Proof of a good Heart; nor any Thing below a new Conversation and Obedience, will pass for a good Evidence of a new Nature.'

Where there is a thorough Change of the inward Principles and Dispositions of the Heart, it will soon discover itself in an entire and suitable Reformation of our Practice; nay, 'twill make us pursue our Obedience to the divine Laws, with so much the greater Diligence and Application; by how much the more careless and negligent we have been in the Performance of them.

Nor is it enough that we resolve upon this for the present and then immediately fall off from our religious Enterprize, like too many, who, whilst they are in Danger of perishing by any accidental Violence from without, or lie languishing on a Bed of Sickness, the Fears and Apprehensions of Death, and of the future Miseries that attend it, will for the present make some small Impression upon their Minds; and influence them with some serious Thoughts and Purposes

Purposes of Amendment: But they are no sooner got rid of these Fears upon their sudden, tho' unexpected Recovery, but the very first Temptation that offers itself is enough to defeat all their pious Purposes and Resolutions, and they immediately return with the Dog to his Vomit, and betake themselves to their old brutish and irregular Practices; nay, many Times become more vile and licentious than ever they were.

But true Penitents that are affected with an hearty Sorrow and Contrition for their Sins, have a more speedy Principle to act upon. They are vex'd and griev'd with themselves for their having committed them, not only because they are like to prove fatal and pernicious to themselves, but because they are offensive and displeasing to God; so that they resolve for the future upon a more strict Observance of his Laws, tho' there were no Punishment annexed to the Breach of them, and persist in those Resolutions, as well in the Time of Health as Sickness, of Prosperity, as Adversity, for as much as they proceed, not from any servile Fear, but a true filial Affection; from an hearty and unfeigned Love of God; which is certainly the best Foundation and Principle of Obedience, and which, if so firmly rooted in them as it ought, will not fail to continue it to the utmost Period of their Lives.

Thus far have I proceeded in explaining to you the Nature of this Duty of Repentance, and shewed you that it consists, not only in a total Renunciation of our Sins, but likewise in an universal

universal Adherence to the Practice of all Christian Duties, and this with the utmost Sincerity of Intention, and with the greatest Constancy and Perseverance in them.

These, my Beloved, are the necessary Qualifications of a true Repentance, and such as God hath promised, That whosoever shall turn to him with a Conversation thus duly qualified, he will immediately turn away from the Fierceness of his Anger; all their past Enormities shall be forgiven them; and that Reformation which is wrought in them shall not only rescue them from that Death which would be the inevitable Consequence of their Continuance in a State of Sin, but they shall moreover live to have all their future good Actions crown'd with the Reward of unconceivable Felicity.

To apply and conclude :

The Sum of what hath been delivered is this, that, since God hath declared so much unwillingness that we should perish, and so great a Readiness to forgive and be reconciled to sinful Man, if he will but turn and repent, as hath been made apparent in some particular Instances, we ought to look upon this as the greatest Inducement to forsake and abandon our wicked Practices, but by no Means as an Encouragement to persist in them, because the greater Indulgences we have received from God, the less Reason have we for the future to expect them, and the more they will add to the Guilt and Punishment of our Sins, unless we are wrought upon to an hearty Sorrow and Contrition.

If

If therefore the infinite Forbearance and Long-suffering of God, in not speedily executing his heavy Judgments upon the Wicked, should be such a prevailing Motive and Argument to stir Men up to the Exercise of this great and necessary Duty of Repentance, then certainly, my Brethren, we of all Men cannot but own ourselves to be under the strictest Ties and Obligations to practise it; being so remarkably distinguished by the continued Series of an indulgent Providence, ¹ that when others were cut off by that dreadful and contagious Distemper which ravaged in Neighbouring Countries with the utmost Fury and Violence, he sent his Guardian-Angels to shield and rescue us from that imminent Destruction to which so many Thousands were made a Prey, and which we had all the Reason in the World to expect would fall suddenly upon ourselves, because we had so justly merited it.

But (God be thanked) he hath not dealt with us after our Sins, nor rewarded us according to our Wickednesses; but hath allowed us greater Time and Opportunity to repent of them, and to be cautious how we ever again incur his Displeasure from the Experience of other Men's Calamities.

But hath either the Fear and Apprehension of the manifest Danger we were in, or the grateful Resentments of our Deliverance from it, wrought these good Effects upon us? If it had, there would certainly have been a more visible Appearance

D

ance

¹ This SERMON was preach'd a little after the PLAGUE at *Marseilles*.

ance of it, 'twould have given some Kind of Check to the Growth and Progress of our Impieties.

But (alas!) we are arrived to such an Height of Insolence as exceeds all the Bounds of Modesty, which should lay such a necessary Restraint upon our Actions; no Consideration of Fear, of Love or Gratitude will prevail with us; but in Spite of all the most powerful Obligations and strict Engagements to our Duty, we are impetuously hurried on to the Perpetration of the greatest Villainies.

For what is it less than this, when Men of loose and profligate Lives, instead of being affected with Remorse of Conscience for their Sins, deride the Duty of Repentance as a poor sneaking Thing, fit to be exercised by none but Persons of base, mean-spirited, pusillanimous Tempers, and to excite and encourage others to the same Excess of Wickedness with themselves, represent those eternal Torments that are threatened against them, as an Invention of Priest-craft, a cunningly devised Fable contrived to amuse the Vulgar and Ignorant, and to debar Men of their natural Rights (as they call them) of sensual Gratification and Libertinism.

But whatever these profane and miserable Wretches may pretend to by such daring Wickedness and Presumption, yet let them not think, for all their merry Scoffings and Insolence, that they shall escape with Impunity. No, he that dwelleth in Heaven shall laugh them to Scorn; the LORD shall have them in Derision. He shall speak unto them in his Wrath, and vex them in his sore Displeasure.

But

But tho' (I hope) there are not many amongst us who are so vain and atheistical as to endeavour to root out the natural Notions of their Minds, by arguing themselves into a Disbelief of this important and fundamental Principle, tho' they acknowledge the Existence of a God, who takes a strict Account of their Actions, the Immortality of the Soul, and the Certainty of a future State of Rewards and Punishments in another World; I say, tho' they declare their free and ready Assent to these and all other necessary Truths of our Religion, yet 'tis too plain from their Prophaneness and Debauchery, their Lewdness and Intemperance, the constant Vitiousness and Immorality of their Actions, that they do not so frequently consider them as they ought.

And yet I am sure 'tis not for want of their being put in Remembrance of these Things; they have had Line upon Line, and Precept upon Precept, repeated Warnings and Instructions daily delivered to them by the Mouth of God's Ministers, to remind them of the dreadful and pernicious Consequence of a wicked Life, to awaken them to a lively Sense of their Duty, to reduce them from the Ways of Perdition and Error, and to bring them to Happiness. This is certainly the chief and principal End of our ministerial Labours, of our Exhortation and Counsel.

And altho' we have but very small Hopes or Probability of Success, when Men's Consciences are so seared, that they are past all Feeling, and

their Hearts so very obdurate, that they are rendered utterly incapable of Impression from any the most powerful Arguments urged from the Consideration either of Duty or Interest, yet God forbid that we should recede from our Endeavours to reclaim them, be they never so ineffectual.

We are commanded to persevere in these our Endeavours; to be instant in Season and out of Season; to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all Long-suffering and Doctrine. And if Men will be so perversely wicked as to frustrate whatever we intended for their Good, we cannot help it. However be that as it will, tho' they never so lightly regard our Counsel, there will be a Time when they shall have Reason to wish they had done otherwise, when they shall perceive what Benefits they have forfeited, and what Calamities they must necessarily undergo for their Abuse and Contempt of it. Like *Esau*, who for one morsel of Meat sold his Birth-right. But you know how that afterwards when he would have inherited the Blessing, he was rejected: For he found no Place of Repentance, tho' he sought it carefully with Tears.

And how can Sinners expect any better Fate, who barter away a much more glorious Inheritance, than to be rejected as he was? Such shall be sure to be perplexed with the Miseries of a too late Repentance, when they shall see themselves utterly excluded those heavenly Mansions that are enrich'd with all the Delights, all the Comforts, all the unconceivable Priviledges
which

which they have been most earnestly invited to, and consigned over to the infernal Regions of Darkneſs, where there is not the leaſt Glimpſe of Happineſs to be found, but inceſſant weeping and wailing, and gnawing of Teeth to all Eternity.



SERMON II.



S E R M O N II.

*The DECEITFULNESS of SIN, and sure
RECOMPENCE of VIRTUE.*



PROVERBS xi. 18.

*The Wicked worketh a deceitful Work: But to
him that soweth Righteousness shall be a sure
Reward.*

IT IS reported of *Democritus* that he
always laughed at the Folly of his
Countrymen the People of *Athens*,
because they were so over-solicitous
in hunting after the vain perishing Enjoy-
ments of this World, which yet (after all
the Hurry and Fatigue it had put them to)
could afford but little or no Benefit, or Ad-
vantage to them.

But certainly, would we but take an im-
partial View into the infatuate Proceedings
of the Generality of Mankind, we should
soon perceive that we have altogether as
much Reason as ever *Democritus* had to de-
ride their Actions as ridiculous, or rather shew
our Dislike of them, by quite different Expres-
sions, and be dissolved into Tears, to think that
Men, endowed with reasonable Faculties to
discern

discern their truest Interest, should act so highly inconsistent with themselves, so very absurd and irrational, as not to be earnest in seeking the most proper and effectual Means to promote it, in the industrious Discharge of all the several Duties of Religion, which have the Promises of such an inestimable Reward attending the due Performance of them: A Reward which, if we consider the Greatness of its own intrinsic Excellence, and that Assurance which we have upon our just Endeavour of obtaining it, should, one would think, be sufficient to influence us with the most zealous Purposes and Resolutions of an holy Life, and to make us press towards the Mark through what Difficulties and Inconveniences soever shall lie in our Way to our Duty; since we are sure to meet with such a glorious Recompence.

But such is the extreme Folly and Ingratitude which most of us are too too frequently guilty of, that, notwithstanding God hath favoured us with the Promises of the richest Blessings upon these Conditions, as with so many Allurements and Incentives to our Duty, yet we wilfully refuse our own Happiness: Not but we are sufficiently industrious to procure it, did we but apply our Industry with Discretion; for we see even in the Wicked, who fall short of it (as 'tis evident from what the wise Man here plainly intimates by their working, as well as from their own Observation and Experience) that it is not altogether to the Defect of their Industry, that the Non-Acquisition of this Happiness is to be imputed to; no, 'tis not so much the Want,

as the Misapplication of their Diligence. Did they but direct their Endeavours to right Objects, and seek their Happiness, where it is truly to be found, a Quarter of the Pains that they now are at, would be abundantly enough to advance them to the Fruition of it; but whilst they place it in the false Pleasures and Interests of Sensuality, and even weary themselves in the Pursuit of it, What is this, but to be at a great deal of Pains to a very ill Purpose? Since all the Toil and Trouble they are at, serves only to bring Mischief upon themselves; and whilst they are eagerly bent upon an imaginary Pursuit of their Happiness, they effectually Labour to be miserable.

For certainly (what Advantage or Benefit soever they may expect to reap from the Execution of Ungodliness, yet) the Practice of Sin is nothing else, than the Production of Sorrow, and although they may be affected with somewhat of carnal or sensual Pleasure, whilst they are committing it, yet they will find it to be but Deceit and Vanity in the Event and Conclusion of it.

That it is so, is what the wise Man hath very truly and positively asserted in my Text, and what I shall make it my Business to prove in my Dissertations upon it; wherein I shall first endeavour to shew who are the Persons here properly meant by the Righteous and the Wicked, or in what Latitude these Terms are to be taken, according to the true Sense and Meaning in which they are used in this Place.

And

And *First*, as to the Righteous: Now the Word Righteousness in its most general and comprehensive Notion is of a very wide Extent, and containeth under it all the several Particulars of our Duty, all that the Gospel hath enjoined and prescribed to us as such, under these three general Branches thereof, *viz.* To God, our Neighbour, and Ourselves. So that in this Sense, by the Man that soweth or worketh Righteousness, or the Righteous, is signified as much as the virtuous or religious Man, one whose Obedience to the Law of God in Respect of its Sincerity is universal, who gives himself wholly to the Discharge of his Duty, both in the ready and willing Execution of whatever Good comes within the Reach of his Abilities to perform, and as carefully declining all the Evil that it is in his Power to avoid; and this, as well out of a Principle of Love, Obedience and Respect to God who requires it of him, as the Hope of any Reward or Benefit that he shall receive for his doing so.

But if we take this Word Righteousness in its more restrict and limited Conception, it signifies no more than our Duty to our Neighbour only, *viz.* such an exact and accurate Observance of the Rules of Justice and Equity in our Dealings with him, that we are altogether as cautious of transgressing them by doing him any Injury in any Respect or Particular whatsoever, as we are unwilling he should do unto us, having such a tender and conscientious Regard to his Interest, that we will not be wrought upon to impair it out of any self-seeking or malicious

malicious Design, by depriving him, whether thro' Fraud, Violence, or Oppression, or thro' any other indirect or unlawful Measures, of what peculiarly belongs to him.

And if the Meaning of the Word be to be conceived under such a Limitation, then, according to the *Antithesis* of my Text, by the Wicked we are here to understand nothing else but the unrighteous or unjust Person, one who violates those Rules of Justice and Honesty which we before observed to be duly executed by the Righteous.

And that it is sometimes used in this Sense is evident from several other Places of Scripture, as particularly, *m The Wicked borroweth, saith David, and payeth not again: but the Righteous sheweth Mercy and giveth.* Where we see that, as the Righteous is commended and approved of for his tender Compassion and Liberality to the Poor, so the Person here condemned and accused of the contrary Injustice, intimated by the Non-Restitution of what he had borrowed of his Neighbour, is term'd the Wicked,

But however, since as it is not to be so confin'd to this limited Acceptation, but that it is capable of a larger Extent, because what is here spoken of the Wicked, to wit, the Deceitfulness of those unjustifiable Actions he is guilty of, may be as truly asserted of Sin in general; so, on the other Hand, forasmuch as any general Truth cannot be better illustrated and confirm'd than by particular Instances, and that I may not deviate from the Design of my Text, I shall in

m Psalm xxxvii. 21.

the First Place endeavour to explain to you the Deceitfulness of Sin under its widest and most general Acceptation; which when I have done, I shall pursue this Argument a little further for the better clearing and Confirmation of this Truth, as it relates more particularly to the Sin of Injustice.

And *First*, as to the Deceitfulness of Sin in general, if we trace it back to its very Source and Head-Spring, we shall find it took its Original from a Lie, and thereby deceived us to our Ruin; which when the infernal Angels had conspired to effect, envying that Happiness of our first Parents wherein they were at first created, and which they had still enjoyed had they continued in their original State of Innocence and Perfection, this was made the very Instrument of depriving them of it. For when God had indulged to them the free Use of all the Variety of the Pleasures of Paradise, restraining their Liberty with one only Prohibition, the Observance whereof was made the indispensable Condition of that Happiness, the Devil, out of a spiteful Envy, endeavours all he can to betray them out of it, by drawing 'em away from the Performance of the Condition upon which it was made. For having taken upon him the Disguise of a Serpent, and full fraught with all the most malicious Subtilty that was requisite to bring about his mischievous Intentions, he accosts the Woman; and taking Advantage of the Weakness of her Sex, which he thought might be most easily induced to comply with the Temptation, he begins to question with her,

her, *" Yea, bath GOD said, Ye shall not eat of every Tree of the Garden?* Blasphemously and impiously asserting that GOD never intended such a Restraint, but to their Prejudice; since that one Tree, which they were denied the free Liberty of eating, would be of infinitely more Value to them than all the rest which they were permitted freely to partake of: A Tree of so excellent a Nature, and of such peculiar Virtues, that did they but know one Quarter of the Benefit which he himself had experimentally found by it, they would have no Need to be perswaded to that which was no less desirable in its Effects, than in itself delicious. For they should no sooner eat of it, but it should so quicken and refine their Intellectuals, and give them such a discerning Insight into the Theory of Nature, that their Eyes should be immediately open'd, and they should be as Gods knowing Good and Evil. And she (poor credulous Woman) list'ning to the sly Insinuations of this delusive Spirit, and believing all that he had suggested to be true, and moreover taken with the Pleasantness of the Fruit, is not only prevailed upon freely to eat of it herself, but likewise imparts to her Husband, and he did eat.

Thus were they both insinuated into Rebellion through the Allurements of specious Promises, which how true they will appear in the Event our own sad Experience is too sufficient an Evidence. We to this very Day feel its fatal and pernicious Consequence in ourselves, and rue the dire Effects of this unhappy Compliance.

For

For instead of improving our intellectual Faculties, as he pretended, it bred such incurable Distempers in our Souls, as made them, that they could not relish even the innocent Pleasures of Life: We know Good and Evil, 'tis true; but no more to our Advantage than to deplore the Loss of the one, and to dread the Infliction of the other. And what Advantage soever we might expect by curiously prying into those forbidden Secrets, which God never intended we should be let into, it served only to make a Discovery of concealed Mischiefs, and, like *Pandora's* Box, let out such innumerable Plagues, such a World of Miseries upon us, as all the Pleasures of Sin will be never able to recompence.

And such deceitful Devils have we still to contend with, who would involve us through reiterated Crimes into still greater Perplexities. To this End they cloath their Temptations with a pleasing Dress, that they may be the more apt to win upon our Affections, being very sensible that our Nature, as corrupt as it is, would never consent to harbour such an hideous Monster in our Breasts, as Sin in its natural Grimace and Deformity would appear, should it be nakedly represented to us.

But, that it may have the more contagious Influence upon us, they put on it a tempting and insinuating Disguise, give it the Varnish of pleasant Fruit, of something that is grateful to the Sense or Appetite, 'till they have hereby rendred it so very alluring and attractive, that

we

we willingly yield ourselves a Prey, and are en-
snar'd and captivated at their Pleasure.

Nay, it allures our very Senses into a Confe-
deracy against us, which are no sooner won by
the Pleasantness of the Temptation, but they
importunately solicit us for Indulgence and Gra-
tification on the Evil it invites us to, and never
cease, till we comply with their Importunity,
how fatal soever may be the Consequences of
such a Compliance.

In a Word, Sin is one continued Scene of
Delusion, an *ignis fatuus*, which the Devil
makes use of to draw aside poor unwearied Souls
into Perdition and Error, and hath no other
Way to accomplish his malicious Contrivances
against us, than by inveigling us into the Pursuit
and Commission of it. For, having darkned
the Eye of our Reason by the Mists of original
Corruption, he thereby renders it unable to dis-
cern its Interest, and consequently more capable
of being deluded with the false Appearance of
Things; and then representing his pernicious
Evils under the false Glosses of carnal Interest or
Pleasure, or some such other Motive which is
most likely to prevail upon our Senses, he plies
us with these delicious Baits, till at last we
greedily catch at our Ruin, and readily embrace
our Destruction.

But to speak more particularly to this Pur-
pose.

That Work is deceitful, whose Reward will
not recompence our Pains and Labour in pro-
curing it. And that this is the Case of the
Practice and Execution of Ungodliness will be
very

very demonstrable; If we consider these three Things.

First, That what Pleasure or Advantage soever we may expect to derive from such a Practice, we can have no Assurance of obtaining it.

Secondly, That although we should obtain it, 'tis unsatisfying.

And Lastly, 'Tis fatal and pernicious in its Consequence.

And First, The Vainty and Deceitfulness of Sin will from hence abundantly appear, in that what Pleasure or Advantage soever we may expect to derive from such a Practice, we can have no Assurance of obtaining it.

Solomon tells us that, *The Expectation of the Wicked shall perish*. That is, all his fruitless and abortive Hopes shall be quashed in the very Embryo, before ever they are accomplished, or advanced to their desired Perfection.

This is a Truth so very plain and obvious, not only from Scripture, but Experience, that there needs no other Argument to be produced for the further Testimony and Confirmation of it. The sundry Disappointments and ill Success that we may frequently observe in the fruitless Endeavours of the Wicked, are a sufficient Proof of it; who altho they never so wisely concert Measures for the Accomplishment of their ill Designs, yet there is an over-ruling Providence which disappointeth the Devices of the Crafty, so that their Hands cannot perform their Enterprize.

And

And what can be the Result of such a Disappointment to them but Vexation and Trouble, when they have been promising themselves a great deal of Pleasure in the Commission of such a Sin, they are surprised with some unlucky Accident which cramps 'em in the Pursuit of their Desires, so that they cannot possibly attain to what they were so very eager in the Pursuance of. If (as the wise Man asserts) *the Desire accomplished is sweet to the Soul*, certainly such a Frustration of it can be nothing else than Bitterness.

Yet such is the Circumstance and Condition of every wicked and ungodly Person, who, when he hath been pleasing his Fancy with the Expectation of I know not what Happiness, in the unlawful Indulgence of his Sensualities, and brought himself into a Fool's Paradise of imaginary Delights, all his fruitless Hopes serve only to enhance his Infelicity, when he beholds his Counsels degenerate into Foolishness; when he sees the Inefficacy and ill Success of his Attempts about the Acquisition of that Happiness (if it deserves to be so called) which he now hath not the least Probability of ever enjoying; in a Word, when he is like to have no better Reward for all the Pains he hath been at in his Endeavours after it, than to see his Purposes overthrown, and his Expectation frustrated.

And yet, if Matters were but duly considered, he hath no Reason to expect that it should be otherwise. For, as God hath the Disposal of the Event and Issue of Things, so that Nothing can

can be done without his Fiat or Permission, we may be sure that he will order his Affairs so as not to let the Wicked have their Desire, but will stand up so far in Vindication of his Justice and Honour as to infatuate and defeat their Intentions, who set themselves up in Opposition to his Will. But the Truth of this I shall hereafter more clearly illustrate by a particular Instance.

But, *Secondly*, suppose the Wicked should succeed and prosper in their Attempts; let the greedy Worldling arrive to the very Top of his Ambition, the sensual Epicure his Pleasure, and all the several Votaries to Sin have their respective Gratifications and Desires; yet what Comfort, what Satisfaction can they meet with in these that should make them so very earnestly solicitous about their procuring of them? I believe verily that we shall after a little Examination find that they are hardly worth so much striving for.

For, *First*, the Pleasures of Sin are not lasting, but fading and transitory; and that not, only in Respect of the Object of these Pleasures, but of our Affections, who have no sooner tasted of the unlawful Pleasures of Sensuality, but we are presently satiated into an Aversion of these Things, and are now as eager to be shift, as we were once earnest in the Pursuit of them.

This Truth is evidently set forth to us in the Example of the incestuous *Amnon*, who, altho' he had the most lovely Object whereon to gratify his Lust, even the Sister of that celebrated Beauty *Abalom*, yet he had no sooner done this, but he, who had been wrapt up in,

and enamour'd with her Charms, now conceives such a deadly Hatred and Antipathy against her that he could not endure so much as the very Sight of her; as you may read in that Story at large in the 13th Chapter of the 2^d Book of *Samuel*: Which Truth will hold equally good in any other unlawful Indulgence, or Interest whatsoever.

But, *Secondly*, the Pleasures of Sin, and Sensuality are not only not lasting but mixt with a great deal of Bitterness that little Time which they do endure. The Pains and Perplexities of a State of Sin will infinitely outweigh all the Pleasures that we can receive from it, if we do but counterpoise the Variety of Mischiefs, the Shame, the Infamy, the Confusion, that Dread and Terror of Conscience, that Trembling and Fearfulness of Heart, which are the natural and genuine Fruits of our Impieties, and which will infuse so much Bitterness into our Souls as will give but an unfavoury Relish to all our voluptuous Enjoyments; which (however they may please and gratify our Senses) will make but a poor Recompence for the spiritual Disconsolation that even necessarily attends it.

Whilst Religion proposeth to us a quite different Reward, excites and engages us by a quite contrary Motive to the Practice of it, in that it spiritually affecteth us with the most unspeakable Ravishments and Delights, with Pleasures that are not fading and adulterate, like the spurious Delights of Sensuality, but such as are pure, permanent, and substantial. It sets us above the Reach of all those Disadvantages of
that

that Reproach and Infamy, those Frights and Confusions which I have already shewn to be the natural Appendants of its Contrary, and, instead thereof, procures such Honour, such Interest, such Reputation, and, to compleat all, such an inward Peace, and Tranquility of Mind as qualifyeth us for the Fruition of all outward Comforts. It not only secures to us all those temporal Blessings which may any Ways contribute to our outward Happiness and Prosperity; but moreover begets in us such a peaceable Temper and Disposition of Soul as renders us capable of receiving them as Blessings.

When we have walked in our Integrity, and have endeavour'd to preserve a Conscience void of Offence toward God, and toward Men; when we are under no Conscience of Guilt, no Fear of Punishment, no Dread or Apprehension of God's Wrath to inflict upon us the one, for defiling ourselves with the Pollutions of the other; but our Consciences are clear and unfullied, free from all those Disturbers and Enemies to their Peace, and enjoy a perpetual Calm under the auspicious Influence of the Divine Favour and Protection; this must enhance the Felicity of our Enjoyments: To be sure, whatever Blessings we receive, we have them in a far greater Perfection than those can with any Reason pretend to, who are under the Turbulencies and Disquietudes of an accusing Conscience to upbraid and interrupt them in it.

In short, there is so much of present Pleasure and Satisfaction derived from the Exercise of Virtue, that, if there were no other Reward

attending the Execution thereof, this alone would be Self-sufficient to encourage us to perform it. So great it is, and it gained such an high Esteem in the Opinion of some of the ancient *Ethnick* Philosophers, that they thought Man's chiefest Happiness did consist therein. And the *Epicureans*, who placed their *summum bonum*, or ultimate Felicity, in Pleasure, if (according to the Notion of the Modern and more refined Part of that Sect) are hereby meant the Pleasures of a good Conscience, which are the natural and necessary Effects of Virtue, their Mistake was not so very great.

For altho' we can never expect to arrive to that Perfection of Happiness, till we come to Heaven, where we shall have whole Rivers of everlasting Pleasures without the least Mixture or Alloy, yet certainly this is the surest Foretaste and Anticipation of that Happiness, and what is given as an Earnest of a future Completion and Enjoyment of it. But the Wicked, as he is destitute of this inward Peace of the Soul, hath no more than the empty Name of Happiness to boast of, such an one as is attended with Terror of Conscience here, and eternal Misery hereafter.

Which brings me to the *third* and *last* Particular, which was to prove the Vanity and Deceitfulness of Sin; not only from the Uncertainty and Unsatisfactoriness of the Enjoyments which it affords, but moreover, as they are fatal and pernicious in their Consequence.

If we advise with the Apostle *St. Paul*, he will tell us, that *The Wages of Sin is Death*; and

and Solomon in the Verse immediately following my Text, that, *as Righteousness tendeth unto Life, so he that pursueth Evil, pursueth it to his own Death.*

This, we see, was the unhappy Consequence of the original Transgression of our first Parents, who had no sooner prevaricated from their Obedience to their Maker in the Breach of that Covenant which they had engag'd themselves in, but the Sentence of Mortality was immediately pronounc'd against them, and, instead of being translated without dying from the Pleasures of an earthly to a celestial Paradise, they were, after a Life full of Care and Perplexity, to return to their Mother Earth, and be dissolved into that Dust out of which they were taken, as you may read, *Genesis iii. 19.*

Nor is the Punishment of this Original Sin less universal than the Guilt of it; it extends it self to all their Posterity, of what Age, Sex, or Quality soever, nor can the strictest Piety relieve us from it. Which since it is so, since the Righteous as well as Wicked are equally obnoxious to this Fate, I shall not at the present consider it so much as a Punishment for Sin in ourselves, (tho' indeed, had not Man sinned he had never died) I say, I shall not at the present consider it so much as a Punishment for Sin, as a Law of Nature, a necessary Condition of the frail Constitution of our Bodies, which being made up of corruptible Principles, must inevitably return to Corruption; but shall proceed to what is more suitable to the heinous Nature of Sin, and is more properly design'd as a Penalty to be inflicted on it.

If the *First*, viz. temporal Death, were the utmost of its Punishment, and there were no future State of Happiness or Misery in another World, as some confidently affirm, who deny the Immortality of the Soul, and perhaps upon no better Grounds for this Assertion, than because it would be for their Interest; if it were so, I say, if this were the utmost they are to endure, the Condition of wicked Men were infinitely better than they will find it to be. But there is another and a far worse Kind of Death prepared for them, in Comparison of which, all their former Miseries were as Nothing, and what is stiled in Scripture * *the Second Death*, when the Soul at the general Resurrection being reunited to the Body (which at the Sound of the last Trumpet shall be awaken'd out of the Dust) and having by this Reunion with it quicken'd all its Powers of Sensation, whereby it shall be made capable of those Sufferings which it must partake of with it, they shall be both immediately summoned to appear at the dread Tribunal of infinite and impartial Justice, where conscious of their own Guilt they shall stand trembling before the Judge; expecting every Moment when the Sentence of Condemnation shall be pronounced against them, which shall be no sooner given, but they shall be for ever banished from the blissful Presence of God; and hurried down to the infernal Pit, into a Lake that burns with Fire and Brimstone; where they shall sympathetically bewail each other's Miseries and Calamities, and that without any the least

least Hopes of their Mitigation, or Possibility of their Redemption from them, being sentenced by an irreverfible Decree to endure the moft exquisite Torments, and be for ever rackt with fuch Pain and Anguifh as is endless and intolérable.

And now is not this, think ye, a glorious Reward, after all the Slavery that Sin has put them to, to make them miserable at laft? How will they complain of their cruel Deftiny, and of the Treachery and Deceitfulnefs of Sin which occafioned it in thefe melancholy Terms? We thought indeed that there was fomething of real Pleafure in Sin, when we were firft tempted to it, but now find it to be a mere Cheat and Impofture. It interpoſed its falſe and ſpurious Delights, to hinder us from purſuing more ſubſtantial and ſolid Happinefs, and to involve us into that Miſery which we now but too ſenſibly feel in ourſelves. Are theſe, vile Traitor of Mankind, the pleaſant Fruits, that when we firſt enter'd into a League and Friendſhip with thee, thou promiſedſt to entertain us with? How couldſt thou deal ſo treacherouſly by us as to pretend Kindnefs, when thy Intention was only to deceive us? All thy fleeting and unconfiſtant Pleaſures have forſaken us, thy unwholeſome Sweets, are now turned into the extreameſt Bitternefs, and that which will laſt for ever.

Thus will they be ever vexing themſelves with theſe and ſuch like unprofitable Complaints, and condemn their paſt Folly and Inadvertency (of which they now by coſtly Experience are convinced) in indulging to the falſe deluſive Plea-

Pleasures of Sensuality, which betrayed them into this inextricable Ruin. But, alas! where there is no Hope of Remedy, there is no Room for Complaint. After-Wit is never good, of no Use at all to prevent the Calamities which they are already fallen into, and their Repentance is too late for a Redress, when their Miseries are incurable. Besides, what Misery soever they endure, 'tis no more than what they voluntarily brought upon themselves; 'tis what they chose, what they pursued, what they earnestly contended for, and therefore 'tis but just they should have it, since they took such Abundance of Pains in procuring it.

I come now to prove to you the Vanity and Deceitfulness of Sin, as it relates to the particular Instance of Injustice; in the handling of which I shall proceed exactly in my former Method, and endeavour to shew the Vanity of the unrighteous or unjust Man's Pursuit and Endeavour, in all the Three several Respects above-mention'd.

First, From the Uncertainty of his obtaining what he sueth for.

Secondly, From the Unsatisfactoriness thereof, tho' he should obtain it.

And, *Lastly*, As it is fatal and pernicious in its Consequence.

My *First* Argument to prove the Vanity of the unrighteous or unjust Man's Pursuit and Endeavour, is drawn from the Consideration of the Uncertainty of his obtaining what he sueth for.

But

But before I directly enter upon the Proof of this, I conceive it will be requisite to enquire what are the principal Objects of his Pursuit. And they are Three, viz.

Riches,
Honour, and
Pleasure :

These are the Things that put him upon the many Cheats and Fallacies which we may observe in his common Dealings and Intercourse; my Business in the first Place therefore is to prove that he falls infinitely short of his Design in every of these Particulars.

And First, as to Riches.

This is a Truth of which the Scripture will sufficiently inform us, if we look no farther than into the Book of *Proverbs*, where we are told, ' That he that by Usury and unjust Gain increaseth his Substance; shall gather it for him that will pity the Poor. And again, ' There is that scattereth; and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth unto Poverty. The Meaning of which is; that, as the liberal Distribution of that which is properly our own, to Charity and good Uses; serves to increase our Substance; so the unjust detaining or appropriating to ourselves what belongs to others is the ready Way to diminish it.

Nor are the *Heathens* altogether silent as to this.

Mē naxā nepd alēv naxā nepdēa 'is' ā'nos, saith *Hesiod*. Be not greedy of unjust Gain, which will certainly prove to thee no better than a Loss. Ill-gotten

ten Goods never prosper: They entail a Curse upon Posterity, and prove such a Canker as eats out the Profit of all our other Possessions, tho' never so lawfully acquired.

And altho' there are some who seem to be as successful as injurious, who for a Time thro' their Deceit and Cozenage do thrive and prosper in the World, and have Riches in Possession, yet let them make the most of them whilst they have them; for they may be well assured that they shall not continue many Generations. *De male quæstis vix gaudet tertius hæres.* It's much if the third Heir be ever the better for it. The Gifts of Fortune, especially what are raised upon no better Foundation than that of Injustice, are exceeding slippery. *Solomon* tells us that, *Riches make themselves Wings, and fly away as an Eagle toward Heaven.*

Besides, suppose the unjust Person, whilst he is thus labouring to get Riches thro' any inequitable or unlawful Means, as Fraud, Oppression, or the like, should meet with no Disappointment or unlucky Accident from without that should prevent his doing so, yet thro' his insatiable Avarice he frustrates his own Design. For certainly a Man can never properly be said to be rich, 'till his Substance be commensurate with his Desires, i. e. till he rest satisfied with his present State or Condition. For suppose a Man were as rich as ever *Cræsus* was reported to have been, yet unless he be content, if he cannot keep his Desires within the Limits of his own Possessions, he is in Reality miserably poor.

But

But this is what is wholly impossible for the Covetous to do (for Covetousness and Ambition have no Bounds) his Desires are as unfatigable as Hell, are ever roving out, in an eager and thirsty Pursuit of what he hath not, till he quite loses the Enjoyment of what he hath. For 'tis observable, that after all the vast Piles of Wealth which he hath been wrongfully heaping up together, the wretched Niggard has not the Heart to improve one Farthing of it to his own Use; but doom'd to *Tantalus's* Fate, he starves in the Midst of Plenty, and rather, than lessen his Heaps, will deprive himself, not only of the Comforts and Conveniences, but the very Necessaries of Life. So that, you see, he falls infinitely short of his Aim in this first Respect, as it relates to Riches.

The *Second* Thing which I told you was the Object of the unrighteous or unjust Man's Pursuit and Endeavour, is Honour.

And indeed 'twas in order to the obtaining of this, that he was so industrious in the Pursuit of the Former, I mean of Riches, which I must needs own is what doth sometimes not a little conduce to the obtaining it. For this is that Golden Idol which Men are generally too apt to adore, and to set too great a Value upon: And indeed, where it comes attended with an honest and generous Disposition, 'tis what deserveth to be esteemed, because it enlargeth a Man's Capacities for doing good, and enables him to put in Practice those Dispositions to Charity and good Works, which would otherwise remain but obscure and ineffectual without it.

This

This is what I very readily grant: But where it is void and destitute of these necessary Ornaments and Qualifications of Virtue, how mean and despicable will it appear! How little in the Eyes of all that are competent Judges of what is truly valuable; that regard a Man more for his personal Merit than the outward Splendor of his Fortune? Which without the other, will be so far from raising him in their Esteem, that 'twill serve but to render him the more ridiculous; because it exposeth him more to the View of the World, which, whilst they overlook the Actions of such as are of an inferiour Rank, will be sure to take a particular Notice of the Behaviour of those whom Fortune hath elated to such Prosperity: It will put them upon enquiring what Original he sprung from? How he came by such a plentiful Abundance? What Measures he took for the procuring it? And other such like Reflections which the resplendent Gaiety of his Fortune will naturally suggest to them: And when by this Means they come to discover the many knavish Tricks, the base, mean-spirited Actions he has been guilty of, this will render him most odious and contemptible, will quite blast the Reputation to which he so ambitiously aspires, and be such a lasting and indelible Stain in his Character as Time itself will be never able to obliterate.

But before we make an Estimate of the Man, we will view him for once in the best and most advantageous Light we can put him in. We'll suppose him to be possiest with all the Varieties that Fortune can enrich him with; his House splend-

splendidly beset on all Sides with rich Furniture; his Table covered with all the Niceties of a delicious Palate, serv'd up with a numerous Train of Attendants; his Body to be clad with the Ornaments of rich Attire; and that he wanted for nothing that was requisite to make him appear with a mighty Figure in the World.

And now after all, What is he? An Ass, bedeckt with gaudy Trappings, which yet will make him never a Whit the more honourable, when we look upon his Ears. All this specious and affected Grandeur will never be able in the least to advance him in the Esteem of the World, nor to silence those Reflections which will be cast continually upon him: No; they will be ever ripping up all his Knaveries and Imperfections, till they have quite stript him of that Honour which he so unworthily invested himself with, and made him look as little in the Opinion of others as he is illustrious in his own.

And altho' there are some who are brought under the Lash of an imperious Upstart, who it may be have some Dependance upon him, and so live under a slavish Fear, yet even these cannot have any real inward Respect for him. 'Tis true, they may pretend to honour him, and refrain from those more open Reflections where-with others are so free; but yet, I'm perswaded, 'tis more for the Sake of their own beloved Interest than out of any sincere Regard to his Person that they do this; they may perhaps live in Expectation of a Portion or Legacy from him, which they esteem so preferable to the Donor, that so they may but enter upon the immediate Possession

Possession of that, I suppose they care not how soon they lay his Honour in the Dust.

The *Third* Thing, which I above-mentioned as the Object of the unrighteous Man's Pursuit, is Pleasure:

'Tis as it were natural for vain Men, when they have been scraping up a great deal of the World together, to use the same licentious Soliloquy as did the Rich Man in the Gospel, * *Soul, thou hast much Goods laid up for many Years; take thine Ease, eat, drink, and be merry.* But certainly there is no one Thing in the World wherein Men are generally more mistaken than in this. They are no sooner swell'd and lifted up with the Abundance of their illgotten Possessions, but they think that all they have to do is to indulge themselves in Ease and Pleasure; to go smoothly on in the Gratification of their unlawful and sensual Appetites and Affections; as if their Riches were an impregnable Fortress and Security against all the evil Accidents that may hinder or interrupt the Course of their intended Jollity and Delight; when, God knows, the most prosperous Condition of this Life doth not want for its Share of Trouble, and a Man is never so free from the Cares of this World, as when he hath but little to do with it.

This is no more than what the Preacher himself assureth us of, from the Testimony of his own Experience; who, altho' he had gathered him Silver and Gold, and the peculiar Treasure of Kings, and that to a greater Heighth of Splendor and Magnificence than all that were

* St. Luke xii. 19.

ever before, or after him, and had furnished himself, as he thought, with all the Varieties that were requisite to make his Felicity compleat; yet, when he came to make an Estimate of these, and of the Labours that he had wrought to procure them, behold, all was *Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*, as you may read at large in the Second Chap. of *Ecclesiastes*, from the 1st to the 12th Verse.

And if there were no greater Comfort or Felicity to be found in what he had received from the peculiar Bounty of Providence, what Pleasure or Happiness then can those expect, who have increased their Substance by Fraud, and their Interest by Oppression?

Tantis parva malis curâq; majore metuq;

Servantur; misera est magni custodia census,

Says *Juvenal*, i. e. as it was with a great deal of Trouble and Hazard that they came by it at the First, so they are under greater Fear and Concern in keeping it; and that Man must be miserably perplexed who hath the Charge of such Treasure.

Most true is the Royal Prophet's Assertion, *That a little that the righteous Man hath is better than the Riches of many Wicked*. Because, tho' it be but little, yet God's Blessing attends it; he enjoys it with a great deal of Quiet and Security: Whereas the wicked Man amidst all his Prosperity hath no Rest, but is ever toss'd with so much Perplexity and Trouble, that the very Thoughts of his Abundance will not suffer him to sleep, as you may find, *Ecclesiastes* v. 12. He labours under a continual Fear and Apprehension that

that his Tricks and Knaveries will be discover'd; he thinks that the World will be as vigilant to find him out as the Eye of his own Conscience: And indeed not without a great deal of Reason; because he hath got him a thousand Enemies (to be sure all that he hath ever injur'd) who will be ever watching for an Opportunity to repay him in his own Kind, or else to bring him to that Justice to which he seems to be such an utter Stranger, in order to make him better acquainted therewith, by showing him the Rigour and Severity of it.

But suppose he should be so lucky as to escape the outward Penalties of human Laws, yet can he be free from the severer Lashes of the inward Law of his Mind? Will not that immediately rise up in Judgment, and upbraid him with the Remembrance of his Guilt, when he hears distressed Widows and Orphans, those poor, innocent, defenseless Creatures he hath wronged, pouring out their too just and grievous Complaints, as so many Witnesses of his Cruelty and Injustice? Sure the Wretch cannot be so stript of the common Sentiments of Humanity, but he must have some Relentings, some Remorse of Conscience at these Things; it will be ready to concur in the Testimony against him, and condemn and persecute him with its incessant and continual Accusations.

And then what Pleasure or Happiness can all his outward Prosperity afford, when the World and his own Conscience are thus set against him? Such a Kind of Happiness, I think, as should not so much provoke our Emulation as our Tears,
that

that deserves not so much to be envied, as commiserated by us.

Which brings me to the *second* Particular, namely, to shew the Unsatisfactoriness of these Things which are made the Objects of the Unrighteous, or unjust Man's Pursuit and Endeavour, though he should obtain them.

For what are Riches, when unjustly gotten, but what, instead of being a Support and Comfort to us, serve but to increase our Distractions and our Fears? What is Honour, when undeservedly conferred, but mere fulsome Flattery, an Instrument for one Knave to make use of, to curry Favour and inveigle with another? And what Pleasure, when it is mixed with so much Bitterness? But of these I have already so fully spoken under the former Head, that I have the less Need to enlarge upon them under this; and shall therefore proceed to demonstrate to you the Deceitfulness of the Sin of Injustice in the *third* and *last* Respect, viz. as it is fatal and pernicious in its Consequence.

For the Proof of this, there needs no other Argument, than only to consider it as a Sin. For if Death and Destruction be the natural Result and Punishment of all Sin in general, as hath been already abundantly evinced, then consequently must it be so of this particular one.

Yet, because there are in Scripture some very express and particular Denunciations against it, I shall, for your clearer Conviction of this Truth, proceed to mention two or three of them.

The first of which I find ^{Malachi iii. 5.} *Woe* unto him that buildeth his House by Unrighteousness, and his Chambers by Wrong; that useth his Neighbour's Service without Wages, and giveth him not for his Work.

And again, ^{Jeremiah xxii. 13.} where God, by the Mouth of his holy Prophet, foretelling our Saviour's first Coming to Judgment at his Incarnation, saith, *And he will be a swift Witness against the Sorcerers, and against the Adulterers, and against false Swearers, and against those that oppress the Hireling in his Wages, the Widow, and the Fatherless, and that turn aside the Stranger from his Right.*

But St. James in his Epistle, Chap. v. is very full and clear to this Purpose. Go to now, says he, ye rich Men, weep and howl for your Miseries that shall come upon you. Your Riches are corrupted, and your Garments are Moth-eaten. Your Gold and Silver is cankered; and the Rust of them shall be a Witness against you, and shall eat your Flesh as it were Fire: Ye have heaped Treasure together for the last Days. Verses 1, 2, 3. And the Sins against which these Judgments are so severely threatened, we have mentioned in the three following Verses: Behold the Hire of the Labourers, which have reaped down your Fields, which is of you kept back by Fraud, crieth: And the Cries of them which have reaped, are entered into the Ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Ye have lived in Pleasure on the Earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your Hearts, as in a Day of Slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the

* Jeremiah xxii. 13.

* Malachi iii. 5.

the Just; and he doth not resist you. It is, you see, their debarring the Labourer of his Hire, improving it to their own Intemperance, and condemning and shedding the innocent Blood of such as were not able to defend themselves.

And when Men are arrived to such an Height, and are instigated by their Covetousness of other Men's Possessions, to commit such cruel Outrages as to take away the Lives of the Owners thereof, though they meet with no Resistance from them, yet God will be sure to take the Cause into his own Hand, and to avenge it either by his own immediate Infliction, or by the Hands of those whom he hath made his Instruments for the Retaliation of his heavy Judgments upon them. As you may see in the Instance of wicked *Abab*,^b who, when his accursed Wife had occasioned the Death of *Naboth* the *Jezreelite*, with a Design to make Way for her Husband to enter upon the unjust Possession of his Vineyard, because he refused so far to comply with the King's Request, as to act contrary to the express Command of the Law,^c by alienating his paternal Inheritance, by the just Judgment of God they were both slain in the very same Plat of Ground whereon they had spilt the Blood of that innocent Person, according to the Prediction of *Elijah*.^d

But if we descend from this more complicated Kind to lower and less Degrees of Injustice, even the least of these shall not escape with Impunity; but whoever becomes guilty thereof, shall

F 2

^b 1 Kings xxi.
And 2 Kings ix. 36.

^c Numb. xxxvi. 8.

^d 1 Kings xxii. 38.

shall be sure, either sooner or later, to suffer for it; and to repose any Confidence or Security in Riches gotten by such infamous and unlawful Means, is certainly very absurd and ridiculous.

The Vanity of such a Practice the Prophet *Jeremiah* very lively representeth to us under this plain Similitude: *As the Partridge sitteth on Eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth Riches, and not by Right, shall leave them in the Midst of his Days, and at his End shall be a Fool*: Whilst the wretched Miser, perfect thoughtless of Futurity, lies brooding and hovering over his Pelf, he shall perhaps be immediately called away to give a strict Account of all the Wrongs and Injuries that he hath committed to procure it. Then he will be sensible, when it is too late, of his extreme Folly and Inconsideration, in spending so much of his precious Time, and exposing himself to so many Hazards and Difficulties for the Sake of that which will be no longer of any Use or Advantage to him: It will neither bribe off, nor suspend the fatal Stroke, nor mitigate that Pain and Anguish which he must for ever endure. No, the Rust of his Gold and Silver will now serve but for a Witness against him, and the Weight of his Bags to sink him down to the very lowest Abyss of Hell, there to be continually tormented: Where he, who in this Life had his Plenty of good Things, that here lived in Riot, and wallowed in continual Luxury and Pleasure, shall not now have so much as one Drop of Water to cool his Tongue; and that because, when it was

in

in his Power, his Mind and Heart were not to do Good, but for his Covetousness, and for Oppression, and for Violence to do it.

Thus have I run through all the Parts of my Undertaking which I at first proposed, and demonstrated to you the Vanity and Deceitfulness of Sin, both in its widest and most general Acceptation, and as it relates to the particular Instance of Injustice.

I should now proceed to the Discussion of the latter Part of my Text, and, to compleat the Antithesis, prove the Certainty of the righteous Man's Reward: But this I take to be the less necessary, because, having so fully and distinctly treated of the several Mischiefs and Inconveniences of the one, you may easily, without any further Explanation, perceive the Benefits and Advantages of the other. Besides, I have all along, in every, or at least in most of the Particulars wherein I have been speaking to the Miseries of Vice, lightly touch'd upon the Felicities of its Contrary, and shewed you that, as the one seldom meets with its desired Success, so the other as seldom comes short of it, but effectually obtains what it sueth for: That it is the peculiar Excellence and Privilege of Virtue, that it never fatigueth us with its Pleasures; but they become the more grateful and delicious to us by long Use and Exercise; because the longer we have been accustomed to it, the more we discover of its incomparable Beauty and Perfection, till it fills us with ineffable Satisfaction and Delight: Whereas the contrary Pleasures of Sensuality cloy us, but can never give us Con-

ments; satiate, but never satisfy: That the one hath its choicest Pleasures, mix'd with a great deal of Sorrow and Bitterness, whilst the other infuses such divine Comforts into our Souls, as sweeten our very Sorrows, and make us happy in our Tribulations: That whilst the Wicked are ambitious to excel in the Honour and Riches of this World, where they shall have but a very short Continuance, the Righteous are intitled to an Inheritance (infinitely more valuable) of a Crown and Kingdom that shall never fade: That the former are ever careful and solicitous about these corruptible, momentary Treasures upon Earth, which are exposed to the Irruptions of Thieves and Insects, whilst the latter secure more lasting and durable Treasures in the Heavens, that are liable to no such Accidents; where neither Thief approacheth, neither Moth corrupteth: That when the one are laying up in Store for themselves a good Foundation against the Time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal Life, the other are treasuring up Wrath against the Day of Wrath.

And now what remains, but that I give you the same Advice as did Moses to the Israelites of old, *I call Heaven and Earth to record this Day against you, that I have set before you Life and Death, Blessing and Cursing: Therefore choose Life, that both thou and thy Seed may live.* You have had a Description of Virtue and Vice set before you, with a long Train of their different Circumstances, in order to render the one amiable, and the other as odious and detestable to you.

you. And now, one would think, you should find it no very difficult Matter so to determine in your Choice as is most consistent with Reason and Interest, *i. e.* to choose Life rather than Death.

And yet it is prodigious strange that, after all that can be said, Men should suffer themselves to be deluded into so fatal an Error, as to quit the Paths of Virtue, which are all Pleasanthness, Peace and Security, and pursue the broad Way, which, without a very solemn and sincere Repentance, will be sure to bring them to irreparable Ruin and Destruction.

Let us then, my Beloved, be better advised, or ever it be too late, and following the wise Counsel of the Son of *Syrack*, let us, before we presume upon any evil Action, consider with ourselves what the Event will be: Let us consider what a dismal Catastrophe it will prove, to have this jovial Scene of Voluptuousness to end in such a tragical Conclusion, and all the flitting, unconstant Pleasures of Sin and Sensuality to terminate in everlasting Misery. Whenever we are surrounded with any Temptations to Sin, (though they seem never so civilly to caress us, yet) let us not, after such fair Warnings, such sensible Experience of their treacherous and ill Designs, suffer ourselves to be led away into the Error of the Wicked, by listening to their false, insinuating Pretences, but strive to oppose and infatuate them with the most constant and zealous Resolution.

But above all, let me give you a particular Caution, not to trust in uncertain Riches, but in

the living God. Let no Principle of Fear or Diffidence at the Meanness of our own Condition, nor of Emulation at the Prosperity of others, instigate us to any unjust or illegal Practices, but, in all our Dealings and Intercourse, let us keep up to the strict Rules of Justice and Honesty, which, though some prophane, atheistical Wretches (who have no other Rule whereby to judge of it than the present outward Appearance or Success) may ridicule as Weakness and Superstition, yet Honesty, in the End, will be the best Policy. And however they may think to advance or secure their Interest or Credit by the quite contrary Methods of Injustice, yet (as wise as they are) in this they will find themselves to be miserably mistaken, since there is nothing gainful, nothing honourable, nothing secure, but Religion.

'Tis this, and this alone, that interests us in all the true Happiness and Prosperity both of the outward and inward Man. He can have no Want of any Thing, who hath God for his Portion; can never be in any great Distress or Poverty, who is rich in good Works, which will intitle him to the Promises of one of infinite Veracity and Power, that is both able and willing to supply us in all our Exigencies (if we are not wanting to ourselves) with whatever is necessary or convenient for us.

Lastly, to conclude; 'tis this alone that will stand us in any Stead at the Day of Judgment, that will perpetuate and compleat our Happiness in another World, when we are no longer capable of receiving any in this. The Felicity of
the

the Righteous extends itself beyond the Grave; where, though they rest from the Fatigue of their Labours, yet when they shall arise from thence, their Works shall follow them, so as to be unspeakably recompensed. *Let not thine Heart, says Solomon, envy Sinners; but be thou in the Fear of the LORD all the Day long. For surely there is an End, and thine Expectation shall not be cut off.*

When Death shall put a Period to the Enjoyments and Prosperity of the Wicked, and all their worldly Interests shall cease; when those that have industriously sown the Seeds of Unrighteousness shall, with the last Breathings of a guilty Mind, bewail their miserable Folly and Inconsideration in doing so, and expect to reap nothing but the bitter Fruits of an unprofitable and misimproved Diligence; we who have been employing ourselves in the more discreet Exercises of Godliness, Justice and Sobriety, shall immediately enter upon the Reward of our good Actions, and receive the End of our Faith, even the eternal Salvation of our Souls.

Prov. xxiii, 17, 18.

SERMON

S E R M O N III.

*Vigilance rewarded: Or, the happy State
of the Wise VIRGINS.*

St. MATTHEW XXV. 10. latter Part.

*And they that were ready, went in with him to the
Marriage, and the Door was shut.*

IF we look back to the two preceding Chapters, we shall find that the Predictions there mentioned have a double Aspect, viz. to the Destruction of Jerusalem, and CHRIST'S coming to Judge the World.

BUT our Saviour chiefly insisting on the latter of these, as what is of the greatest and most general Concernment, and endeavouring from the Consideration of the Uncertainty of the particular Time when it shall be, to awaken and stir us up to a constant and habitual Preparation for his Coming, at the Beginning of this Chapter he further pursues his Design, by evincing the Necessity of such a Preparation from the Parable of the ten Virgins.

Then, saith he, *Shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten Virgins, which took their Lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom. And five*
of

of them were Wise, and five were Foolish. They that were Foolish took their Lamps, and took no Oil with them: But the Wise took Oil in their Vessels with their Lamps. While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at Midnight there was a Cry made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him. Then all those Virgins arose, and trimmed their Lamps. And the Foolish said unto the Wise give us of your Oil, for our Lamps are gone out. But the Wise answered, saying, Not so: Lest there be not enough for us and you: But go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for your selves. And while they went to buy, the Bridegroom came, and they that were ready, went in with him to the Marriage, and the Door was shut.

Now, the Design of this Parable is to shew the different State and Condition of the Righteous and the Wicked at the Day of Judgment, which is here plainly set forth to us by the different Success of the Wise and Provident Virgins, and of the Foolish and Improvident.

For whereas the Wise Virgins had made a sufficient Provision of Oil for their Lamps, they were always in a Readiness to meet the Bridegroom, whenever he should come, and (what you see was consequential to that) to enter with him to the Marriage, in order to partake of the Privileges of the Solemnity.

Whilst the Foolish Virgins, for want of this provident Care, were miserably put to it: Their Oil was spent, and their Lamps were gone out, and while they were going to buy more, the Bridegroom came in the Interim, and so they

lost

lost the Opportunity of accompanying him to the Marriage. For though they afterward sued for Admittance, 'twas in vain: The Door was shut, and they were denied Entrance.

Even so shall it be at CHRIST's Coming, whether we take it for his last and general Coming to Judge the World, or his particular Coming to us at the Hour of Death.

Such as with the Wise Virgins have their Lamps ready trimmed, *i. e.* are deck'd with those divine and heavenly Graces and Virtues, which are the Ornaments and Defence of a Christian, shall be secure enough, free from all fearful Apprehensions of Death, and of the Judgment that follows it. Nay, they shall be so far from being terrified at its Approach, that they are prepared to meet it with as much Courage and Chearfulness as they would the Bridegroom at a Wedding, well knowing that 'tis the greatest Privilege to them, the surest Inlet and Introduction to their Happiness.

Whilst the Wicked, utterly regardless and unmindful of Futurity go on careless and unconcerned in their licentious Courses, quench the Light of God's holy Spirit, which should guide and direct them in their Duty, suffer its Gifts and Graces (like the Lamps that went out for want of Oil) to be extinct in them, and frustrate all its kind Influences and Endeavours to reclaim them; by their Obstinacy and Impenitence; such (like the Foolish Virgins) are but in an ill Posture to meet the Bridegroom; for should he come and find them thus unprepared, they shall, in Spite of all their most pressing Im-
por-

portunities, be excluded as unfit to celebrate his heavenly Nuptials, and be repulsed by him with an *ἐγὼ οἶδα σὺ μὴ, I know you not*, shall be disowned and rejected for ever.

In the Words thus explained, there are these two Things to be considered:

First, That none shall enter into a State of Happiness, but such as are duly qualified and prepared for it.

Secondly, What Preparation is necessary in order to our Admittance into that State.

The *first* Thing that offers itself to our Consideration is, that none shall enter into a State of Happiness, but such as are duly qualified and prepared for it.

Now, to render this Truth the more plain and familiar to our Capacities, and to shew the manifest Unworthiness of those who forfeit this Happiness by their wilful Ingratitude and Disobedience, our Saviour hath, in the former Part of this Chapter, very aptly alluded it to a Marriage.

Marriages, you know, are usually celebrated with Pomp and Magnificence; and all that are invited, are to add as much to the Solemnity as they can, by a suitable Appearance and Deportment upon such Occasions: If they do not, especially when such as enter into this State are Persons of Rank and Distinction, 'tis looked upon as a Mark of Disrespect; so great, that in Scripture 'tis represented as highly punishable, as you may read in the Parable of the Marriage of the King's Son; where you will find what a severe Sentence was passed upon him who presumed

furnish'd to appear without a Wedding-Garment; no less than to be cast into outer Darknes, where there is weeping and gnashing of Teeth.

And though this be but a Parable, and so we can have no Assurance of the Truth of the Relation as to Matter of Fact, yet 'tis very apposite to our Purpose: Nor are we to expect any better Fate, unless we endeavour to make a more suitable Preparation against this solemn Meeting of our Bridegroom.

For, if he were so severely condemned, who appeared without a Wedding-Garment at the Marriage of the King's Son, how strictly ought we to prepare ourselves, who must all of us attend at the Marriage of the Son of the King of Kings, of the Great Creator and Governor of all Things, both in Heaven and Earth, to whom all the Powers in both do pay their suitable Homage and Adoration, and on whom an innumerable Company of the highest Order of Angels are to attend as his Ministers?

Besides, he that in the Parable was punished, or represented to be so, for his Disrespect, was no more than a common Guest. But with us the Case is quite otherwise: For in these heavenly Nuptials CHRIST is married to his Spouse, the Church, whereof every individual Member, i. e. every faithful Part of it, hath a Share in his Espousals, and is owned and looked upon as his Bride. Can we then be too exact and curious in decking ourselves with such Ornaments as he requires, and would render us amiable and acceptable to him?

Did

Did the Son of God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, so far debase himself, as to come down from his heavenly Habitation to this Vale of Misery and Inquietude, and suffer such bitter Things for our Sakes, to rescue us from the sad and deplorable Condition we were reduced to, and advance us to this Honour and Dignity, and strict Union with himself? Did he, for the Confirmation of our Faith, and to support and comfort us in his Absence, give us Assurance, a little before his Departure hence, that in his Father's House are many Mansions, whither he was going to prepare a Place for us, and promise to come again, and receive us to himself with the tenderest and most affectionate Embraces, that where he is, there we may be also, and abide with him for ever in a State of the most perfect Happiness? An Instance this of such superlative Love and Condescension, as would leave us wholly without Excuse, should we be so far wanting to our own Interest, and make such ungrateful Returns to his Love, as not to suffer it to prevail upon us for our Good, after such an unquestionable, such a consummate Experience of it. If we do not, instead of accompanying him to those happy Mansions, we can expect no other than to be deservedly thrust down to the contrary Regions of everlasting Misery.

But, *Secondly*, That none but the Righteous shall enter into a State of Happiness in Heaven, is plain and evident from the very Nature of Things: Because such is the Happiness of that Place, that it is impossible the Wicked should

should have any true Enjoyment thereof, were they actually admitted into it.

Heaven would be no Heaven to us, unless our Souls were filled with such devout and heavenly Dispositions as are agreeable to the Purity of that State.

The gross and carnal Appetites and Affections, which we have for the Pleasures and Interests of this Life, would have but a very dull insipid Taste and Relish of the Joys and Pleasures that are at God's Right Hand.

To illustrate this by an Instance. We will suppose a Company of devout and pious Souls were met together, to offer up their Sacrifice of Prayer and Praises to God, joining in perfect Harmony of Devotion, and wrapt up in all the Pleasures and Extasies of it; and that there should come in a poor, debauched, atheistical Wretch, whose Heart is intirely devoted to his Lusts and Sensualities; what Taste, think ye, or Relish could he have of these divine and spiritual Exercises of Religion.

He, who was but just before revelling amongst his lewd Companions, was then, as you may suppose, not very fit for such religious Employments; nor is he one jot more so now. For 'tis not the Change of his Company will work any Change in his Heart. That's grown too hardned and inveterate to be so far influenced by their Examples as to be stirred up to a devout and pious Imitation of them.

Nay, should he outwardly join with them in Prayer, he would but offer the Sacrifice of a Fool, a meer formal Devotion, without any manner

manner of Life or Spirit in it. For tho' he seem to draw near to God with his Lips, his Mind and Heart are wholly alienated from him, taken up with Things of a quite contrary Nature to what all the rest are most seriously intent upon. Whilst they are lifting up their Souls to Heaven on the Wings of the most ardent Love, his Affections are fast glued to the Earth, wholly immers'd in the Cares, the Pleasures and Interests of this inferiour World, and consequently incapable of being raised to divine and celestial Objects.

This Allusion I choose the rather to make, because I am apt to think there is nothing upon Earth so much resembles the blessed State and Condition of the Saints above as our religious Assemblies, especially when such as join in them are acted with the true Spirit of Devotion. And if the Wicked are incapable of joining with such, whilst they are in the Body, and subject to the same Infirmities with them; how unfit would they be for the Society of Angels, and the Spirits of just Men made perfect; whose Perfection infinitely transcends that of the devoutest Christian upon Earth under its greatest and most elevated Improvements.

No, this cannot possibly be, till a thorough Change shall be wrought in us, till our Nature shall be refined and spiritualized, freed as well from the Guilt as Corruption of it. Then, and not till then, shall we be accounted meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints, of everlasting Joy and Happiness in the Kingdom of Heaven.

G

But

But this naturally leads me to the *second* Thing to be considered, *viz. What Preparation is necessary in order to our Admittance into that State.*

From what hath been already spoken it appears, that what unqualifies us for a State of Happiness is Sin; and consequently the only Way to gain Admittance into that State, is to keep ourselves as free as possibly we can from the Guilt and Pollution of Sin, to be so far from indulging to it, as to loath and detest it as our greatest Enemy, derogating from the Excellence and Perfection of our Nature, and destructive of our everlasting Interest.

And this Inference is very natural. For if a Man be in Pursuit of any Thing that is valuable, and he meet with any Impediment in the Way, what hath he to do, but to endeavour to remove that Impediment, which obstructs and hinders him in the Pursuance of that Thing?

And so must it be here, unless we take care to free ourselves from the Clogs and Incumbrances of Sin, 'twill prove such a mighty Lett and Impediment to us in our Christian Race, as to hinder us from ever obtaining the Prize: Nay, 'twill shut Heaven's Gate against us, whereinto, it is said, *h No unclean Thing can enter, nor any Thing that defileth.*

And this will yet farther appear, if we enquire into the Nature of the Happiness of that Place, which though it be beyond all Description, and we cannot have a true and adequate Notion of it, till we actually come thither, yet have we
such

such plain Intimations of it from Scripture as acquaint us in some Measure what it is.

Thus St. JOHN, ¹ *Beloved*, saith he, *Now are we the Sons of GOD, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: But we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

Here you see wherein this Happiness doth chiefly consist, viz. in the Vision of GOD, a Being of infinite Purity and Perfection; and, as a necessary Qualification of our seeing him, we are to be made like him, to be conformed to the Nature and Will of GOD, without which we can never expect to have any true Enjoyment of him. And therefore, as it follows in the next Verse, *Every Man that hath this Hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

We must, according to St. PETER's Advice, ^k *Behave as obedient Children, not fashioning ourselves according to the former Lusts, in our Ignorance: But as he which hath called us is holy, so must we be holy in all manner of Conversation.*

Holiness is the necessary and indispensable Condition of our Happiness. *Without Holiness,* saith the Author to the HEBREWS^l, *no Man shall see the LORD.*

He, who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity, will never admit such as are stained with the Guilt thereof, into his Presence; but will for ever banish them out of his Sight, as odious and offensive to him.

'Twas for Sin he thrust *Adam* out of *Paradise*; to whom, had he continued in his original State

G 2

¹ 1 Ep. iii. 2. ^k 1 Ep. i. 14, 15. ^l Chap. ii. 12, 14.

State of Innocence and Perfection, there had been nothing wanting to perpetuate and compleat his Happiness.

For when God had finished the several Works of the Creation, he pronounced all Things good, as they came out of his Hands. But especially Man, upon whom he stamp't the Impress of his own Image and Likeness, he design'd should be the Object of his peculiar Favours, not only giving him the Lordship and Dominion over the rest of his Creatures, but also promising, after a Life spent here in the full and peaceable Enjoyment of the greatest Variety of Pleasures, to translate him without dying from his present happy Condition to an infinitely Better in another World.

But no sooner had he prevaricated from his Obedience to his Maker in tasting of the forbidden Fruit, but the Scene was changed. God immediately divests him of all his Privileges, drives him out from that Place of Pleasures, to till the Ground out of which he was taken, and pronounces upon him the Sentence of Mortality, as the deserved Recompence of his Disobedience and Ingratitude.

And though, out of his infinite and undeserved Goodness, he devised a Means for his Banished to return, in sending his beloved and only begotten Son to rescue him from that Destruction, to which he had exposed both himself and his Posterity, and reinstate us in a Capacity of eternal Life and Happiness; yet this is still upon the Terms and Condition of our Obedience, of our strict Observance of his pure, undefiled Religion,
and

and our constant and assiduous Exercise of those Laws which are prescribed to us under the New Covenant of the Gospel. " 'Tis this that," as one saith, " must enlighten and enlarge the
" Mind, and restore it from the Degeneracy of
" its lapsed Estate; renewing upon us the Image
" of our Maker, and adorning us with those
" Beauties of Holiness which belong to the hid-
" den Man of the Heart."

For 'tis the Work of Religion to root out the Corruption and Depravity of our Nature which have defaced this Image, and restore us to as great a Degree of Purity and Holiness as we are capable of in this Life. To which End the Laws of Christianity are most excellently subservient, being so refined and improved above the Laws, either of Natural, or the *Jewish* Religion, that the obliging Force of them extends as well to the most secret and retired Acts of the Soul, as the outward and visible Operations of the Body. They will not allow us to indulge to, no, nor so much as entertain any one sinful Lust or Desire in our Heart; but engage us to banish thence whatever would defile and pollute it, to curb and regulate all our naturally evil Propensions, and bring into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of CHRIST.

So that if we would but give up ourselves to a strict Conformity to the Laws of this our most holy Religion, 'twould work such a thorough Change and Reformation in us, as would in a great Measure restore the Image which we had lost, by sanctifying all the Powers of our Souls,

G 3

and

■ Bishop *Wilkins's* Principles of Natural Religion, *ch.* 7. *p.* 373.

and raise us from a State of Degeneracy and Corruption to such a Resemblance of the Purity of the divine Nature, as would qualify us for his kind Acceptance here, and the blissful Enjoyment of him hereafter.

And to bring us to this, *viz.* a State of Holiness and Happiness, our blessed Saviour hath not only furnished us with the most excellent Laws, but likewise endeavoured to enforce them upon our Practice by the Influence of his own Example: An Example of the most spotless unblemish'd Life, adorn'd with all the Beauties of Holiness which may stir us up to an Emulation of his exemplary Purity and Perfection.

And though it be impossible for us to come up to a Pattern of such strict Piety and Virtue as he hath set us, yet we must strive to imitate it as near as we can. He, who hath left us an Example that we should follow his Steps, at the same Time very well knew that we could never arrive to such divine Perfection as he did. He hath a lively Sense and Fellow-feeling of our Infirmities, and therefore makes suitable Allowances for such Failures and Defects in Duty as proceed from the unavoidable Weaknesses and Imbecillities of our Nature, and graciously accepts of our sincere, though imperfect, Obedience.

If we do but endeavour to perform the Will of our heavenly Master to the utmost of our Power (and certainly 'tis in every Man's Power to do this) 'tis as much as he requires. He exacts of no Man more than he is able to perform; but proportionates the Measure of our Obe-

Obedience to the Measure of our Abilities; where he hath given but little, if we take care to improve that little to the best Advantage, it shall not fail of its Reward.

This will plainly appear from the ensuing Parable, where we read, that he who was intrusted with two Talents, and by his Care and Industry had gained other two besides them, was as much entitled to a Reward as he that had made a proportionable Improvement of the five Talents.

And whereas he that had received but one Talent, fell short of it, Why was this? Not because he had received but little, but because he had made no Improvement of that little which he had received; and for this Reason, when the other two were rewarded for their Fidelity, he was doomed and sentenced to a Curse.

Now whether it be the Design of our Saviour in this Parable to represent to us by the one Talent, the State of the *Heathens*, who walked by the meer Light of Nature, and by the two Talents, that of the *Jews*, who had the Truth revealed to them by imperfect Dawnings and Discoveries under the Law, and by the five Talents, that of Christians, who live under the clearer Light and Revelation of the Gospel; or whether it be to represent to us the several Degrees and Capacities of Christians, 'tis plain that he lays no severe or rigorous Injunctions upon any Man.

He is the Traveller there spoken of, that is gone into a far Country, *viz.* to Heaven, and hath appointed to each of us our Task, and we have no room to complain of the Difficulty of

it, in that he requires no more of us than in Proportion to the several Advantages and Opportunities he hath given us.

If there be any that have not arrived to a competent Knowledge of his Will (which is the Case, not only of the Heathens, but sometimes even of the Professors of Christianity, who for want of a regular Education, and being well instructed in the Faith, cannot have so clear and adequate a Notion of their Duty, nor be able so nicely to distinguish between the exact Limits of Virtue and Vice; but that they many Times, through Ignorance, incur the Guilt of a Transgression) he patiently connives at their Mis-carriages.

But though the Ignorance of such Persons be an Extenuation of their Guilt, yet this will be no sufficient Plea for all Kinds of Ignorance.

I know there are many who are apt to plead Ignorance for an Excuse, and to say, that, as they know no better, God will not require so much of them. When at the same Time, if they are ignorant, they are voluntarily so, through their own wilful Neglect.

Such are those, who seldom or never take a Bible in their Hands, or come to Church, to be instructed in their Duty. If you ask them the Reason, they will tell you, they are so taken up with the Cares of the World, and the Management of their secular Concerns, in making necessary Provision for themselves and Families, that they have not Time.

But hark ye; Is the Business of your secular Callings to interfere with the necessary Duties of Religion?

Religion? Hath not GOD, who is Truth itself, and cannot lie, given you Assurance in his Word, that, if you will but *seek the Kingdom of GOD and his Righteousness, all these Things shall be added unto you?* Be not over solicitous about these Things: You have a much more weighty and important Business upon your Hands, the Care and Welfare of your precious and immortal Souls, and the securing their eternal Happiness and Salvation.

This is the Work which your LORD hath set you to do, and woe be to you, if you do it not. When he comes to reckon with you, he will give no Heed to such vain and frivolous Excuses, but will immediately consign you over to the Doom of the idle and unprofitable Servant.

For none of you can be so ignorant but you must know that there is Work to be done, that there are certain Terms and Conditions of Obedience to be fulfilled, which though they are not difficult, through the Help and Assistance of GOD's Grace, to such as set about them with an hearty Zeal and Resolution, yet are they enough to take up and employ all your Time and your Powers, if you would be esteemed as good Proficients in Christianity, and walk worthy of your Vocation.

For Christianity is an active industrious Calling, that will not admit of Idleness and Security in any of its Professors. 'Tis in Scripture called a Race and a Warfare, Terms that imply a great deal of Striving and Diligence:

And

And so shall we find it in our Christian Warfare and Race, if we so fight as to become Conquerors, and so run as to obtain.

For we have a great many Enemies to encounter with, a great many Lusts to be subdued and mortified, and a great many Graces and Virtues (Talents which God hath given us) to be improved, or ever we can arrive to such a Degree and Perfection of Holiness, as will qualify us for Heirs of his celestial Kingdom.

Let us but look to our great Exemplar, and see the Painfulness and Severity of his Life, what a strict Obedience he paid to the Will of his Father, as well active, as passive, in what he did, as what he suffered for us, before he could reconcile him to sinful Man, and restore us to a State of Happiness and Salvation.

Such was his Fasting forty Days together, when he was under the Solicitations of the Tempter in the Wilderness; his spending whole Nights in Watching and Prayer, and the Fatigues he underwent in going about from Place to Place for the Good and Welfare of Mankind, not only in respect of their Bodies, but their Souls; not only in healing the Diseases and Infirmities of the First, but also in curing the natural Blindness and Ignorance of the Latter, making Men thoroughly apprehensive of the Guilt and Danger of Sin, and bringing them to a lively Sense of their Duty.

Since

Since therefore he hath done so much for us, certainly there's all the Reason in the World (and 'tis what he indispensably requires of us) that we should do something for ourselves. And whatever some lazy Christians may think, who seem too confidently to rely upon their Saviour's Merits, without any Endeavours of their own, they will find themselves under a very grievous Mistake. For though the Merits of CHRIST in what he hath done and suffered for us, be abundantly sufficient to purchase our eternal Happiness and Salvation, yet there is no other Way to render them effectual to ourselves than by our own personal Obedience, by using our most hearty and sedulous Endeavours to copy after his Example in imitating his Abstinence, his Watchfulness, his Devotion, his Charity, and all other divine Graces and Virtues that were eminent and conspicuous in him.

This is the only Way to approve ourselves to him at his second Coming, when he shall perceive us going forward in an uninterrupted Series of good Works, and constantly and habitually employing ourselves in the Practice of all Christian Duties. Happy is that Servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.

But (with Shame and Confusion be it spoken) we see the Generality of Christians, such as profess themselves so, fall very short of this Perfection.

Our blessed LORD (as I before observed to you) fasted forty Days, to teach us the Duties of Mortification and Self-denial. But we choose rather to spend our Days in the contrary Vices of Luxury and Intemperance, and indulging ourselves in all Kinds of Sensuality and Uncleaness. He spent whole Nights in Watching and Prayer. We in Riot and Excess; and we, when we should be calling upon the Name of God with Reverence in our Devotions, are profaning it with horrid Oaths and Execrations. He made it his Business to do good both to the Bodies and Souls of Men. But (God knows) we do but little to either, not so much for want of Opportunity, as Will; for whatever are our Capacities, or what State and Condition soever we are in, we might make ourselves useful and profitable, if we would, in some respect or other, to our Fellow-Christians.

If we are superior to others in Wisdom, we may be assistant to them by our wholesome Advice and Counsel; If in Riches, by our Bounty and Liberality; And if in Power, by the due and regular Execution of our Authority, in the suppressing of all Manner of Wickedness and Vice, and the Maintenance of God's true Religion and Virtue.

For certainly these are so many Talents put into our Hands, and which we must be accountable for at the Day of Judgment. And such as are entrusted with them, would do well to consider of this.

But,

But, alas! How many are there to whom God hath given Wealth and Riches, and, yet instead of putting them to pious and charitable Uses, they make them only subservient to their Lust, Ambition, and Revenge? How many are there in Power, who when they should make Sin and Wickedness the Objects of their just Resentment, do rather patronize and encourage it by their too great Indulgences, and the corrupt Influence of their own Examples? How many are there, that, whilst they are eminent for their Parts and Learning, and might be Instruments of a great deal of Good in the World, do yet apply these Talents to a quite contrary Purpose, and instead of exercising them in their Master's Business, in promoting the Cause and Interest of Religion, are endeavouring, by their Wit and Sophistry, to check the Progress of Christianity, and scoffing at and ridiculing every Thing that is sacred?

These Men (especially the Latter) are in my Opinion in a most sad and lamentable Condition; and I need not tell you where they are to expect their Wages, who are so forward to do the Devil's Work, and promote the Interest of his Kingdom, by drawing over as many Profelytes as they can to Vice and Irreligion.

And however they may be flushed with a vain Conceit of themselves, for their extraordinary Wit, Industry, and Success, yet I must take the Liberty to tell them, that such Industry as this, is the worst of Idleness, and
their

their Wisdom is but Foolishness with God. They shall be taken by him in their own Craftiness: And the Counsel of the Froward shall be carried headlong.

Happy, infinitely happier will it be with them, be they never so ignorant, that take Care to live up strictly to that little which they know, than with these profligate Wits of our Age, who having attained to such a Degree and Perfection of Understanding, are guilty of this gross and scandalous Abuse of it. And although they may look upon these honest (though illiterate) Persons as no better than Fools and contemptible; yet all that judge rightly, will conclude from the Regularity of their Practice, that they are under the Guidance of a much superior Wisdom, influenced by the Holy Spirit of God, which is certainly the most infallible Rule for our Conduct, and that they act like Men that are wise unto Salvation.

How can they be any longer accounted ignorant (though never so destitute of human Learning) when they have the Light and Directions of the Holy Spirit for their Guide, which will lead them into all Truth, and for their good Use of their one Talent, and Improvement of the first Degrees of Grace, will increase it to them in still greater Measures and Proportions. Such shall grow in Grace, or (as the *Psalmist* expresses it) shall go from Strength to Strength, from one Degree of Grace and Holiness to another, till they arrive to as great Perfection as they can possibly

bly attain to in this Life ; ^a have their Hearts firmly established in Goodness, and are thoroughly furnished and prepared to every good Work.

And, oh! How happy should we be, were we come up to this Perfection of Grace, whereby we should be made plentiful Partakers of the divine Nature, and enter into the strictest Union and Fellowship with God! Every Degree of Grace would be a still nearer Approach to him, and conform us more and more to his Likeness. Nay, 'twould give us a Foretaste and Anticipation of our future Happiness in Heaven by a Kind of Vision of God, when by the contemplative Powers of our Souls we should take a View as it were of his divine Excellencies and Perfections.

And though we can now see but through a Glass darkly with the Eye of Faith; yet by this distant and imperfect View of him we should discover so much of his incomparable Beauty as would inflame our Hearts with the greatest Ardour of Love, the greatest Desire of enjoying him, such a Desire as would influence us with the most constant and steady Resolutions of Obedience; and *neither Death, nor Life, nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor Things present, nor Things to come, nor Height, nor Depth, nor any other Creature*, be it never so dear to us, *should be able to separate us from his Love, or stand in Competition with him.*

And when we are once come to this, when we can look down with a generous Contempt

^a St. Matth. xxv. 19.

Contempt upon the World, upon all its Pleasures and Interests, and suffer neither its Temptations to allure, nor its Terrors to affright, nor any Difficulties we meet with to discourage us from our Duty: When by the blessed Influence of divine Grace we are exalted to such a Degree of Purity and heavenly Mindfulness as to wean our Affections from all sublunary Enjoyments: When in the Course of our Pilgrimage here upon Earth we have still an Eye to a better Country, have our Conversation in Heaven, and can raise our Thoughts and Desires to invisible and intellectual Objects: When our Souls are filled with Longings to take up their Residence in the City of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, among the general Assembly and Church of the First-born, and the Spirits of just Men made perfect: Then shall we be ready with Cheerfulness to obey his Summons, whenever he shall call upon us, being duly qualified to see him as he is, and be ravished with the Glories of the Beatific Vision.

To draw to a Conclusion of this Subject.

From what hath been said in the former Part of this Discourse, wherein I undertook to shew you what Preparation is requisite to qualify us for a State of Happiness, you may observe that, although God insist upon our hearty and sincere Endeavours of Obedience, as the necessary and indispensable Condition of obtaining it, yet he doth not insist upon

having

having this Obedience so compleatly and perfectly fulfilled by us, as to have no Defect in it.

'Tis true, we are enjoined in several Places of Scripture to be perfect, as *St. Matt. v. 48*, *2 Cor. xiii. 11*. but yet this Perfection of Obedience can be no otherwise meant than in Respect of our Intention and Endeavour. God doth not expect of us that we should live the Life of Angels, or come up to a pure angelical Perfection, as long as we are in this miserably imperfect State. The most upright Man upon Earth, were he to be weighed in the Ballance of the Sanctuary, would be found wanting. There is no such Thing as Perfection on this Side Heaven; but there's still so much of the Remains of natural Corruption in the best of Christians, as sometimes instigates them to the Commission of Sin, which yet, as it is not wilfully indulged to, will never so far rise up in Judgment against them, as to exclude them from those happy Mansions.

And therefore, they are to be looked upon as severe and uncharitable Judges, who when any one is overtaken in a Fault, are ready to denounce Anathemas against him, and to represent his Sin as unpardonable, and what will never be forgiven, quite contrary to the whole Tenour of the Gospel, which promiseth Forgiveness to all upon their hearty Sorrow and Contrition.

Others there are who seem with as little Truth as Charity to assert, that if a Man die in any unrepented Sin, he is damned for ever.

H

This

This (I protest) is giving Christians a very uncomfortable Prospect. The former of these leave the Sinner no Room for Repentance. The latter as confidently affirm, that his Sin will certainly damn him without Repentance.

But I would fain have these rigid Perfectists, if I may so call them, a little explain themselves, and let us know in what Latitude the Sense of this Expression is to be taken.

If by Sin they mean an obstinate habitual Indulgence to Sin, so far I agree with them. But suppose a Man should through Weakness, Inadvertency, or the sudden Surprise of a Temptation be drawn into the Commission of Sin, which yet upon a cool and deliberate Reflection he would be so far from indulging to, that he on the contrary would abandon it with Detestation and Abhorrence: I say, suppose such a one should be suddenly cut off in that very Act of sinning, before he hath had Time and Opportunity to repent of it; can any one, without Breach of Charity, imagine, that God would consign him over to a State of endless Torment and Misery for this one single Act of Disobedience, though the constant Tenour of his Life and Actions have been good and regular?

Hard Sentence upon poor Man naturally subject to innumerable Frailties and Infirmities, and surrounded with Temptations on every Side! This to me seems to be stripping God of the most prevailing Attribute his Goodness the Source of Man's Redemption; and setting too light by the infinite Merits of a crucified Saviour,

our, to think that after all he hath done and suffered for us, the cruel Tortures and Agonies he endured, to rescue us from everlasting Perdition, God should bereave him of the Travail of his Soul for every involuntary Slip or Failure, when he hath paid such a Ransom for our Deliverance.

If this be the Case, I know not how the best of Christians can be secure. If thou, LORD, shouldst be extreme to mark what we have done amiss, who may abide the Severity of thy Justice? Who can say, I have made my Heart clean, I am pure from my Sin?

And yet this and such like Doctrines, which have very much staggered the Faith, and wounded the tender Consciences of some weak and melancholy Christians, have been advanced by a Sort of precise formal Teachers, who for their extraordinary Shew of Sanctity were once called by the Name of *Puritans*, that reckon themselves of the Number of God's Elect and sanctified Ones, excellent Saints in their own Opinion, without Spot or Blemish.

Now how free they are from those I shall not take upon me to determine, but shall leave that to the Determination of God's impartial Judicature, when every Man shall be tried what he is; whether he hath walked in bare Pretence, or in Truth, ostentatiously, or uprightly before him.

And so likewise are they on the other Hand, in a very dangerous Error, who neglecting to renew and sanctify their Nature by a Life of Holiness and Religion, depend upon any After-

Purgations of the Soul, or upon any Thing to be done for it, when by Death 'tis separated from the Body.

For this Life is the only Time that is allotted us to finish the great and necessary Work of our Salvation; and should we let slip the present Opportunity, we shall never have another of executing thy Will, O God, or finishing the Work thou hast appointed us to do. For the Grave cannot praise thee, Death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the Pit cannot hope for thy Truth.

And how soon this may be the Case of any of us here present, to be confined to the dark Cells of the Grave, God only knows. Some of us have no Reason to expect from the Course of Nature that it will be long. Nor can the most youthful and vigorous of us all promise himself one Moment's Continuance in this Life.

To convince you of this, what can I say more than what you yourselves may learn from their own Observation and Experience? You see how Death ravages through all Orders and Degrees of Men, from the Highest to the Lowest, as well Young as Old, Rich as Poor, the Great and Honourable as those that are in Subjection, the Wise as well as the Foolish and Ignorant, without any Difference or Partiality.

—*Æquâ lege necessitas*

Sortitur insignes et imos:

Omne capax movet urna nomen.

Hor. Lib. 3. Ode 1.

And

And should it be our Lot to be arrested by the cold Hands of Death, or ever we have made any Preparation for it; should we like the foolish Virgins, be surprised at the unexpected Coming of the Bridegroom, when our Oil is spent, and our Lamps are gone out, Good God! what a Hurry and Confusion should we be in?

We read that, when at the Giving of the Law upon Mount *Sinai* God appeared to *Moses*, though it were in Love, it cast the holy Prophet (notwithstanding he was as well prepared for such a Vision, as any Man, as to his Purity and Innocence) into a very great Fright and Consternation.

How then shall we be able to endure the dreadful Pomp of that tremendous Day, when he shall come in Fury against his Adversaries for their Contempt and Violation of his Laws? When (as if all Nature sympathized for the Miseries of Man) the very Earth shall quake, and the Heavens shall tremble; the Sun and the Moon shall be dark, and the Stars shall withdraw their shining: And the LORD shall cause his glorious Voice to be heard, and shall shew the lighting down of his Arm, with the Indignation of his Anger, and with the Flame of a devouring Fire; a Fire not to refine or purify, but utterly consume all Things that offend.

Attended with Myriads of Angels he shall come in the most terrible Majesty; and through the Alarm that shall be given by the Sound of a Trumpet, the sleeping Atoms shall be awakened out of the Dust, and all the World

summoned to appear, to receive the just Re-
compence of their Actions.

Wherefore, since we look for such Things, and that his Appearance may not be to our Terror, but Comfort, let us be diligent, that we may be found of him in Peace, without Spot and blameless. And that we may present our Souls as a chaste Virgin to CHRIST, instead of the filthy Garments of Sin and Sensuality, let us invest them with all the Ornaments of Grace, the clean and white Array of Innocence and Virtue. Like the Maid that decketh herself with her Jewels, and as a Bride adorned for her Husband.

Thus fitly and decently prepared, we may be bold to meet him, whenever he shall come. For then he will accost us with the most pathetic Compellations: *Arise, my Love, my fair One, and come away: Come away, my Beloved, my Sister, my Spouse; come into my Garden, and eat thy pleasant Fruits. Partake freely of the Tree of Life, which is in the Midst of the Celestial Paradise, and drink of the chrystal Streams of living Water, which perpetually flow from the Throne of God.*

No sooner spoken, but we shall be immediately lifted up on high on the Wings of Cherubs, which shall swiftly convey us through bright Regions to the Mansions of eternal Rest and Felicity.

S E R M O N



S E R M O N IV.

*The Cure of NAAMAN'S Leprosy, alluding
to the two Sacraments.*



2 KINGS, v. 13. latter Part.

*My Father, if the Prophet had bid thee do some
great Thing, wouldst thou not have done it?
How much rather then, when he saith to thee,
wash, and be clean.*

 O shew that the Designs of Providence
are sometimes brought about by slender
Instruments, we have in this Chapter
an Account of a remarkable Cure
wrought upon *Naaman the Syrian*, by Means of
a young Captive *Israelitess* that waited on his
Wife; who, expressing her hearty good Wishes
for his Recovery, spake thus unto her Mistress,
*Would God my Lord were with the Prophet
that is in Samaria: For he would recover him
of his Leprosy.*

She had heard, no Doubt, what great Things
had been done by *Elisha*, when she was in her
native Country, which gave her such a strong
Assurance of Success, that the Prophet would

certainly work a Cure upon her Lord, would he but apply to him for it.

And those that were about her observing the Saying, and looking upon the Manner of the Child's expressing herself with so much Zeal and Earnestness as something extraordinary and portentous, immediately rehearsed it to the King: Who forthwith wrote a Letter to the King of *Israel*, saying, *Now when this Letter is come unto thee, Behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my Servant to thee, that thou mayst recover him of his Leprosy.* Which he had no sooner read, but very much concerned at the seeming Extravagance of the Request, that he should require of him what he looked upon to be highly absurd and impracticable, he rent his Clothes. And when *Elisba* heard of it, he sent to the King, saying, *Wherefore hast thou rent thy Clothes? Let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a Prophet in Israel.* As if he had said, As God hath testified a special Regard to his People, by sending to them his Prophets, and I, who am of that Number, a Prophet of God, have, to evidence the Truth of my Commission, wrought many Miracles amongst them, so as to the Man who hath applied to thee for the Cure of his Distemper, do but send him to me, and he shall soon be experimentally convinced that, by the extraordinary supernatural Power which I am endued with, I am well able to perform what he hath requested of thee.

And when *Naaman* came to the House of *Elisba*, the Prophet sent Word to him, saying,
Go

Go and wash in Jordan seven Times, and thy Flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean. But Naaman concluding he would have shewed him so much Respect as to come out to him, and let him have had the Pleasure and Satisfaction of a visible Operation from his own Hand, by laying it on the infected Part, but now finding himself disappointed, turns away full of Fury and Resentment, to think that he should come so far to have such a Remedy prescribed to him as washing in a River. Whereas, if that were likely to do, he might, without giving himself the Trouble of coming thither, have made use of the Waters in his own Country; which were far preferable in his Estimation to that which he was directed to. *Are not Abana, says he, and Pharpar, Rivers of Damascus, better than all the Waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean?* And his Servants came near, and spake to him in the Words of my Text, *My Father, if the Prophet had bid thee do some great Thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, wash, and be clean?*

Now, in the Management of this Subject, we are to consider the Reasonableness of what Naaman's Servants alledged to him, to bring him over from his Rashness and Incredulity to a Compliance with the Prophet's Prescription, and enquire wherein the Force of it lies. And this we shall find it to do in these three Particulars.

First, In the Authority of the Person that prescribed the Remedy. *If the Prophet had bid thee*

thee do some great Thing, wouldst thou not have done it?

Secondly, The Easiness of the Prescription it self.

And Thirdly, The great Benefit that would accrue to him from his Compliance with it. If the Prophet had bid thee do some great Thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, wash, and be clean?

And first, The Force and Reasonableness of what Naaman's Servants alledged to him, to bring him over from his Rashness and Incredulity to a Compliance with the Prophet's Prescription, is grounded on the Authority of the Person prescribing.

And that was no less than a Prophet of God, and not only so, but one that had a double Portion of his Spirit: One, who by the Force and Energy thereof had wrought such stupendous Miracles; that all reasonable and unprejudiced Men must look upon them as so many convincing Proofs and Demonstrations of his divine Commission and Authority, and that what he did was by the Power of God. Such as multiplying the Widow's Oil; raising the dead Son of the Shunammite; healing the deadly Pottage; all which we have an Account of in the preceding Chapter. If therefore by the Force and Energy of the divine Spirit that was in him he had done such extraordinary Things, Why might he not, by Virtue of the same Spirit, be enabled to work a Cure upon a distempered Person?

He

He that had restored Life where it was lost, no doubt, might easily preserve it where it was. He that had cleansed the deadly Potage of those noxious Qualities that were in it, so as to make it wholesome and nourishing, sure might be very well able to infuse such into an innocent Water as should cleanse *Naaman* of his Leprosy.

'Tis true, there might naturally be no more of any healing medicinal Virtue in this than in any other River. But the divine Power, by which he acted, was confined to no such Limits as those of natural Causes, under no such Restriction.

The utmost that the most skilful Physician can do, when any one comes to him for the Cure of his Distemper, is to apply such Things as he judges proper for that End from the good Effects they have naturally produced upon such as have laboured under the like Malady or Indisposition. From the Knowledge he hath acquired by Study, Experience, and the frequent Success he hath met with in the like Cases, he forms a rational Conjecture that what he applies, may prove successful in the present one. But in this he only hopes for the best: He can have no Assurance of it. But when the Prophet tells *Naaman* what he should do in Order to be cleansed, he makes no manner of doubt of Success; nay, positively affirms that he shall be sure to meet with it.

He was very sensible that whatever he undertook for the Manifestation of God's Glory to the World, to convince the *Heathens* of his di-

vine

vine and infinite Power, and of the Vanity of their Idols, he would enable him effectually to perform: That he who prescribed Laws to all natural Things, and assigned to each of them their several and respective Influences, could, for the Accomplishment of his own Design, suspend, or alter them, how, and whensoever, he pleased.

For in all the Creatures there is what the Schoolmen call an obediential Power to perform their Creator's Will, and whereby they are sub-
vient to his great Ends and Purposes even be-
sides the common Course of Nature.

For Instance, when God would make a Way for his People through the *Red Sea*, by dividing the Waters, and staying their natural Fluidity, they, in Obedience to his Will, stood erect like any solid Substance, and served for a Wall to them on their right Hand, and on their left.^a And again we read, ° that when *Shadrach, Me-
shach, and Abednego*, were cast into the Midst of a burning fiery Furnace, God, to keep the Fire from hurting them, so suspended its usual Qua-
lity of Heat, that it had no Power over their Bo-
dies, nor was so much as an Hair of their Head
sing'd.

And so likewise in the present Instance; sup-
posing there was naturally (as I said before) no
healing, medicinal Virtue in the River *Jordan*;
nay, farther still, had it been altogether as ve-
nomous and infectious as the *Stygian Lake*, yet
he could have caused it to produce quite dif-
ferent Effects upon the Person that applied to
him,

him, have so entirely changed and corrected its Influences, as to make it as healing and salutary as the Waters of *Bethesda*.

Indeed, what *Naaman* chiefly objects against is, that *Elisha* did not come out to him, and call upon his God. He might probably think, yea, and with very good Reason too, that what he undertook was above the Reach of human Power to perform, without the Concurrence of the Almighty to aid and assist him in it.

Why, the Prophet did not pretend to any such Thing. For when he tells the King, that if *Naaman* would come to him, he should, by the Greatness of the Cure, be convinced that there is a Prophet in *Israel*, he hereby plainly intimates that what he undertook, was not, as *Daniel* told *Nebuchadnezzar* ^p, for any Art or Skill that he had naturally *more than any living*. He did not arrogate any innate Power to himself to work such a Cure upon him, but acknowledges it was derived to him from above; that he was no more than an Instrument in the Hands of Providence, to carry on its Designs: Whatever he did, it was by the Guidance and Direction of a superior Agent, through a divine and supernatural Assistance.

Since, therefore, God had sent and impowered him to work these miraculous Cures, why should *Naaman* make any Scruple or Objection against the Manner of Performance? Which how impracticable soever it might seem, yet with God nothing is impossible or difficult.

Obedience, or a ready Compliance with the Prescription, was all that was required to render

it

it effectual to him, as we find by the happy Issue and Success of it. For he no sooner went down, and dipped himself in *Jordan*, according to the Prophet's Direction, but his Flesh came again like unto the Flesh of a little Child, and he was clean.

That Man would be looked upon as a distrustful and froward Patient, that should question the Virtue and Efficacy of whatever the Physician prescribes to him. He would act much more prudently in resigning himself up to such as are of a superior Judgment, that better understand the Nature of his Indisposition than himself, and know how to apply suitable Remedies for the healing of it. And if we are to repose so much Confidence in human Skill and Understanding, sure then we may very safely rely upon those who have a far better Rule for their Prescriptions, the infallible Dictates of the Holy Spirit of God.

So much for the Authority of the Person that prescribed the Remedy.

The next Thing to be considered is the Easiness of the Prescription.

And, pray, What was this? Why, 'twas only to wash himself in a River, which, if it would have done him no Good, could do no Harm, could put him to no great Expence or Trouble: Nay, 'tis what People many Times choose to make use of purely for their Pleasure and Diversion.

But when we farther consider the good Consequences thereof, what an immediate and thorough Cure it wrought in him, certainly he would

would have been very much wanting to himself, had he not tried the Experiment.

But this leads me to the *third* and *last* Particular, viz. the great Benefit that accrued to him from his Compliance with it.

And this was his being cleansed of a nasty, foul Distemper, noisom and infectious even to a Proverb; that wrought such surprising Changes in the Body, as rendered it quite ghastly and terrible to behold, as you may find by the Description of it in *Miriam* ⁹, where *Aaron* cries thus to *Moses* with the utmost Consternation, *Alas, my Lord, I beseech thee, lay not the Sin,* (i. e. the Sedition we have stirred up against thee) *upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. Let her not be as one dead; of whom the Flesh is half consumed.*

Under the Law, when any Man had but the least Symptoms of this Distemper, he was immediately shut up in some separate Apartment, and, if it proved to be the Leprosy, was not permitted to enter into the Congregation, 'till he was cleansed.

Martin Bucer ¹ will have it, that, "should not the Contagion thereof be stayed, 'twould prove such an Annoyance to the Commonwealth and Posterity, that, if any Leper were incurable, 'twould be a Reason sufficient for his being divorced and alienated from his Wife and Children."

Who then would not willingly undergo the severest Remedy, much more such an easy one as is here prescribed, to be rid of a Plague so very

very lothsome and disagreeable in it self; so destructive of human Society; but especially when it is a Means to separate us from those, to whom we, by all conjugal Affection, and Ties of Nature, are indissolubly cemented.

To apply what I have delivered upon this Subject.

Now the Use that I shall make of this Doctrine is, to perswade you to consider the State and Condition of your Souls, and, as you tender their everlasting Welfare, Interest, and Security, by no Means to slight and disregard your spiritual Guides and Physicians, whose Office it is by their wholesome Advice and Doctrine to cure them of the Disease which they have contracted, and restore them to as great a Degree of Health as they are capable of in this present State of Degeneracy and Corruption.

A Disease of such a malignant Nature, that, although we are not altogether so sensible of our Malady, having never had the Knowledge or Experience of perfect Health and Soundness, yet, I assure you, it is far worse than the Leprosy of *Naaman*, how bad soever that hath been represented, much more lothsome in it self, and fatal and pernicious in its Consequence.

That could only affect the Body: But Sin is that spiritual Leprosy which by its unhappy Contagion hath so defiled and eclipsed the Soul, that better Part of us, which resembled our great Creator, and hath made it so different from what it was, that, were he not a God of infinite Goodness and long Suffering, he would immediately cast us out of his Sight as filthy
and

and abominable, would disown and reject us for ever.

What Qualifications soever it had, or whatever was amiable and commendable in it, that Clearness of Understanding, that Rectitude of Will, that Purity of Affection, which were once its Glory and Excellence; all its Powers and Faculties are now impaired, vitiated, and corrupted. That spotless Integrity, the Impress of the divine Image that was originally stamped upon it, is very much sullied and defaced; its regular Propensions are all turned the quite contrary Way: So that, instead of performing our Creator's Will with Pleasure, as Man once did in his pristine State of Innocence and Perfection, the whole Bent of our Inclinations is only to Evil continually.

Like a distempered Palate, it nauseates what would be for our Good, and greedily pursues and embraces what would tend to our Ruin and Destruction. A Destruction so great, that in this Respect also it far exceeds the Leprosy of *Naaman*, which could only tend to the demolishing this earthly Tabernacle, and cause a Separation of Soul and Body by a temporal Death: Whereas this tends effectually to the Ruin and Destruction of both, by Death eternal in the Regions of Darknes, in a State of endless Disconsolation and Misery, from which there is not the least Hope or Possibility of a Redemption and Deliverance.

And what farther adds to our Infelicity is the Difficulty of our being cured of this Disease. As to bodily Distempers, they are many

Times healed by applying a proper Remedy to the infected Part. But this hath so spread and diffused it self, as to corrupt the whole Man. Nay, it hath crept and insinuated it self into our very Nature: 'Twas a necessary Ingredient at our Formation, and inherent in us from our Mother's Conception.

So that, before a Cure can be thoroughly and effectually wrought in us, here must be a thorough Change and Renovation of our Nature, we must in a spiritual Sense be born again, and entirely renewed as to the inward Temper of our Minds; the Thoughts and Dispositions of the Heart, which, as the Author of our Being tells us, are naturally *evil from our Youth* ¹; *desperately wicked* ²; and St. Paul ³, though in a regenerate State, speaks thus of himself, *I know that in me (i. e. in my Flesh) or carnal Nature, dwelleth no good Thing: For to will is present with me but how to perform that which is Good I find not.*

Which Texts plainly and evidently set forth the Greatness and Incurableness of our natural Corruptions for any Thing we can do for ourselves. Nothing below a divine and infinite Power can cure us of our Malady. 'Tis the Blood of Christ that must cleanse us from the Guilt and Pollution of Sin; and 'tis the Influence of God's Grace and Holy Spirit that must renew and sanctify our Nature: Which as it is to be obtained by the outward Means and Instruments of it, none are so effectual to that End as those which are of God's own Appointment;

¹ Gen. viii. 21.

² Jer. xvii. 9.

³ Rom. vii. 18.

ment; and which are certain to procure a Blessing upon us, if they are not frustrated by our Disobedience and Infidelity.

Now, amongst several that are mentioned in Holy Scripture, I shall enlarge upon two only as most agreeable to our present Subject, and these are the *two Sacraments*.

The *First* whereof is *Baptism*. This is that Laver of Regeneration, that mystical *Jordan*, wherein he that is much more than a Prophet, hath bid us *wash and be clean*; and which both our Saviour and his Apostles recommend in several Places in the *New Testament*.

In *St. Matt. xxviii. 19.* CHRIST gives this Commission to his Disciples, *Go ye therefore, and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* And *St. Mark* * he tells them that, *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.* And to shew the Necessity of Regeneration, he speaks thus to *Nicodemus* in his Evening Conference with him, * *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a Man be born of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.* And again, when the Jews wanted to know how they should be released from their Guilt in crucifying the *Messias*, *St. Peter* thus advises them, * *Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of JESUS CHRIST, for the Remission of Sins, and ye shall receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost.* And * *Paul* and *Silas* in Answer to the Jailor that was converted by their miraculous Deliverance out of

I 2

Prison,

* *St. Mark xvi. 16.* * *St. John iii. 5.* * *Acts ii. 38.* * *Chap. xvi.*

Prison, when he asked them what he should do to be saved, made this Reply, ^a *Believe in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and thou shalt be saved, and thy House.* And, for a sure Test and Manifestation of his Faith, he and all his were baptized *παραχρῆμα* immediately and without any Delay, as a Thing necessary to be done.

Many more Texts might be alledged to the same Purpose, but I shall mention but one more, and that is, ^b *As many of you as have been baptized into CHRIST, have put on CHRIST.*

Baptism is an Initiation into the Church of CHRIST, "Out of which there is no Salvation," says a learned Father. And St. Cyril lays so much Stress upon it as to affirm, "Εἴτε μὴ λάβῃ τὸ Βαπτισμα, σωτηρίαν οὐκ ἔχει. i. e. ^c "Unless a Man be baptized, he is not in a State of Salvation." But then he excepts the Martyrs, "Who, *says he*, have without Water obtained a heavenly Kingdom. For, *as he goes on*, our Saviour, who redeemed the Earth by his sufferings upon the Cross, and was wounded in his Side, sent forth Blood and Water: That some in Time of Peace might be baptized in Water, and others in Time of Persecution, might be baptized in their own Blood."

Now although I shall not take upon me to vindicate this Assertion of St. Cyril in the Rigour and Strictness of it, as though none but the Martyrs shall be saved without Baptism, yet 'tis certain, that by Baptism we are incorporated into the mystical Body of CHRIST, in whom alone

^a Acts xvi. 31.

^b Gal. iii. 27.

^c Catech. iii. p. 61.

alone we are to expect Salvation. By this we are listed under CHRIST's Banner, the great Captain of our Salvation, who in all our spiritual Combats will be sure to stand by us, and guard and protect us from our Enemies. By this we enter into CHRIST's Fold, that good Shepherd which will provide both for our Safety and our Sustenance. By this we are engrafted into the true Vine, as he metaphorically styles himself, from which we shall derive that spiritual Nourishment by Virtue whereof we shall be enabled to bring forth the Fruit of a divine and spiritual Life.

In all which fore-mentioned Respects and Relations you see we are brought by Baptism under his peculiar Care; so that whatever Favours and Benefits he hath to bestow, as certainly he hath the greatest, you may be sure he will have a special Regard for his own People, his Members, his Soldiers, his Sheep, his Branches, for those that are of his Family, and the Household of Faith.

And, therefore, such as refuse to come into CHRIST's Family, that will neither enter themselves, nor suffer their Children to be entered into this Covenant with God, whereby they should be freed from their Corruptions, and made Partakers of the divine Nature, of those *exceeding great and precious Promises*, as ^c St. Peter calls them, Promises of eternal Life and Happiness, which he here freely offers to us as the Reward of our Fidelity and Obedience, how shall they escape, who neglect so great Salvation?

I 3

Indeed

Indeed, as to young Children who through their Parents Neglect were never admitted to Baptism, and die in their Infancy without it; or those *Heathens* who never heard of CHRIST, and are utter Strangers to the Covenant of Promise, and yet have lived up strictly to the Laws of natural Religion, forasmuch as their Want of Baptism did not proceed from any Neglect in them, but from their invincible Ignorance or Inability; we hope, and, I think, ought in Charity to believe, that the Benefits of CHRIST'S Sufferings will extend to them, though they were never baptized.

But with such as I have been speaking of, the Case is quite different: Such as were born in a Christian Country, are come to Years of Maturity and Discretion, live under the Light and Privileges of the Gospel, and have the fairest Opportunities of Information and Instruction in their Duty, and yet, out of a Principle of Pride and Obstinacy, and to gratify their own capricious Humour, stand out against a plain positive Institution of CHRIST, and shew so little Regard to his Precepts and Injunctions as to reject the essential Parts of Christianity, are without Excuse, and shall be severely punished for their Contempt and Violation of them.

Hear what *Peter Martyr* says to this: “*Ne-
que hic sensum nostrum, aut humanam rationem
sequi debemus, ut id putemus ridiculum aut le-
vis momenti esse, quod Deus instituerit.* We
ought not to be too opiniative, nor lean so
much to our own Understanding, as to de-
ride

“ ride that which is of divine Institution as ridiculous, or look upon it as a Thing of little or no Moment or Concern to us.”

St. Cyril tells us, “ That Jesus hath sanctified Baptism as he himself was baptized; and if the Son of God was baptized, What good Man,” says he, “ would set light by that Sacrament, the Fruits and Benefits whereof are,” as he saith in another Place, “ Freedom from Captivity, Remission of Sins, the Death of Sin, the Regeneration of the Soul, a white Garment, an holy and indelible Seal, the Delights of Paradise, the procuring a celestial Kingdom, and the free Gift of the Adoption of Sons.”

But enough of this. To lay again the Foundation of the Doctrine of Baptism to such as have been already baptized, and of whom it may be reasonably expected that they should go on unto Perfection, will perhaps be thought a needless Task. But, pray, hear me. Do ye testify your free personal Consent to that Covenant by the earnest and steady Resolutions and Endeavours to fulfil whatever Engagements your Godfathers and Godmothers did then enter into on your Part, by renouncing the Devil and all his evil Suggestions, the fantastical Vanities of the World, and manifesting an utter Aversion to Wickedness and Carnality; by building up yourselves on your most holy Faith; by your daily Growth and Improvement in Grace; by your constant Perseverance in the Practice of all Christian Duties, and leading

Lives answerable to the Dignity and Purity of your Profession?

Or, if you have not done this, do ye in the next Place consider that although the Guilt of original Sin be done away by the Laver of Regeneration in Baptism, do ye consider what Spots and Blemishes are in your Souls through the many actual Ones you have since committed; how ye have defiled yourselves (the Temple of the living God) by the Uncleanliness of your Lusts and Sensualities? Have ye taken Care to get out these Stains and Sullages by coming to the Blessed Sacrament of the LORD'S Supper? Have ye been washed? Have ye been sanctified? Have ye been purified with the Blood of CHRIST, which he there freely offers to you for your cleansing? and which, joined with your penitential Tears, and a lively Faith in his Merits, would so thoroughly and effectually cleanse you from the Guilt and Pollution of your Sins, that, were they of never so deep a Dye, they would be made as white as driven Snow, or scoured Wool: And though they were enough to incense God, and provoke him to shower down the Deluge of his Wrath; though you had abandoned his Holy Spirit, (that harmless and innocent Dove) from you by the noisome Filthiness of your Corruptions; yet would he now return to you with an Olive Leaf in his Mouth, an Emblem of Peace and Reconciliation; would shed his salutary and comfortable Influences upon you, and by his divine Inspiration enkindle such an holy Flame in your Hearts as would utterly consume all
your

your sinful Lusts and Affections, and, instead thereof, possess them with a sincere and ardent Love of God, create in them new Desires, and be a strong and powerful Incentive to Piety and Virtue.

Nay, so great and inestimable are the Benefits that accrue to all worthy Partakers of this Holy Sacrament, that if we did but thoroughly weigh and consider them, instead of slighting, we should long impatiently for the Return of such an heavenly Feast, and be ready to cry out with Holy David [†], *My Soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God: When shall I come to appear before the Presence of God?*

Yet such is the gross Stupidity of the Generality of Christians, so unmindful are they of their spiritual Concerns, that when they should be paying due Homage to their Creator, should strive to avert his Indignation, and procure his Blessings by their diligent Performance of these Holy Offices of Religion, we may truly affirm of them, as did the Lyrick Poet of himself;

Parcus deorum cultor et infrequens, that they seldom, if ever, attend at the Worship of God before his Sanctuary.

'Tis recorded in Scripture of Holy Job, that he shewed such a strict and religious Care for his Children, as upon the bare Probability of the Guilt which they might have contracted at their merry Meetings, to offer continual burnt Offerings for their Sanctification and Atonement.

Whereas Christians are now become so very heedless and negligent in this Matter (and which

[†] Ps. xlii. 2.

which I am afraid is the Case of several here present) as to go on from Time to Time, yea, perhaps for their whole Lives, in a known habitual Course of Impiety, and multiply their Transgressions as *Sodom*, without once appearing at the Holy Communion in Order to obtain Remission of their Sins, and expiate their Guilt by a propitiatory Sacrifice.

Not but (as hath been already observed) you have had Motives sufficient to induce you to it, had ye the least Spark of Grace and Ingenuity in you.

If the Request of a dying Saviour, who was so very zealous in promoting your Welfare and Happiness, as to lay down his Life for the procuring of it: If when he hath richly furnished a Table at the Expence of his precious Body and Blood, which he voluntarily sacrificed for the Redemption, he calls upon you with the most endearing and pathetical Invitations, Eat, O Friends, drink, yea, abundantly, O Beloved, partake freely of the Banquet I have prepared for you, in Memorial of my Sufferings and Death, and for your own spiritual Comfort and Refreshment: If the frequent Exhortations of God's Ministers, which are constantly given before the Celebration of this Festival: If Deliverance from the worst of Evils, and the Collation of the greatest Benefits: If the strongest Motives and Arguments that can be drawn from the Consideration of Interest, Gratitude and Obedience, had any Force or Influence upon you, there are none of these but what have been

been alledged to bring you over to a Compliance with this important, this necessary Duty.

As to those pitiful Objections that are made against it, they are clearly and fully answered by Archbishop Tillotson in his *Perswasive to frequent Communion*, and therefore I earnestly recommend that excellent Discourse to your Perusal. What I shall here take Notice of is, that these Objections are started by two Sorts of People.

The First are the Infidel prophane Contemners of the *Sacrament*, that like *Naaman* call in Question the Virtue and Efficacy thereof. They will tell you, they don't see any great Good in it, or that such as do receive it are ever the better Christians.

But how do they know this? If they are not so good Christians as they ought to be, yet they might have been worse, perhaps, had they never received it. For when they are present at the Solemnity, where they have the joint Prayers of the Church to implore the Assistance of God's Holy Spirit, which may enable them to amend their Lives, and give them a more regular Turn and Disposition of Heart; I say, besides the supernatural Influence of divine Grace, can they forbear, even under the common Sentiments of Humanity, to look back upon their past Offences with Horror and Detestation? When they see the Bread broken, and the Wine poured out, will not this put them in Mind how CHRIST's Body was torn and mangled upon the Cross, his Hands and Feet pierced with Nails, and his Side with a Spear, which
put

put him to such 'cruel Torture as forced from him this exceeding bitter Cry (like one in utter Despair, and final Dereliction of the divine Favour) *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Can they reflect upon all this without being melted into the deepest Sorrow and Contrition for their Sins that brought such a grievous and insufferable Load of Miseries upon him? Will it not give some Check and Restraint to the Growth and Progress of their Impieties?

But granting there are some Monsters in the World, that are under such extream Hardness and Insensibility of Heart, as not to be at all moved or affected by these Things, nor receive the least Influence or Impression from these visible Signs and Representations of CHRIST's Sufferings, does it therefore follow that others must be so too? Or is the Abuse of a good Thing a sufficient Argument against the Use of it? No more than 'twould be to plead against a Man's going through a regular Course of Physick, for the Restoration of his Health, because it hath proved fatal to some by its being applied contrary to the Directions.

But 'twould be in Vain for me to pretend to produce Arguments for the convincing of such as are Proof against all Conviction. When Men are so very perverse and obstinate, and so far prejudiced against the most solemn Duty of Religion, as to turn their Backs upon it, and cry, *The Table of the Lord is contemptible*, nothing is to be done with such Reprobates but to leave them to themselves, to suffer that sore
and

and condign Punishment which is reserved for them, who thus trample under Foot the Son of God, and count the Blood of the Covenant wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy Thing, and do despite unto the Spirit of Grace.

And therefore I shall now address myself to the other Sort of Objectors, and these are the Doubtful and Timorous, that are under such Diffidence of themselves as to be cautious of receiving the Sacrament, -least they should not be duly qualified for so sacred an Institution.

But if this be your Mind, in the Name of God, why don't ye endeavour to fit and prepare yourselves for it? If ye are unworthy to approach this Worldly Sanctuary, how think ye to be ever fit to enter into the Holy of Holies? If ye are unfit to communicate with Christians here upon Earth, how can ye ever expect to be admitted into the blest Society in Heaven, where no unclean Thing can enter?

God doth not expect of you an angelical Perfection in any of your Services here. Do but use your sincere and hearty Endeavours to do the best you can, and then what is deficient on your Part, will be abundantly supplied by the infinite Merits and Satisfaction of CHRIST; which if ye apply to yourselves by Faith and a due conscientious Use of his Ordinances, 'twill tend to the Improvement of such divine and heavenly Graces and Virtues as will restore your Nature to its primitive Perfection, and by the precious Blood of CHRIST, and the blessed Influence of the Spirit, you shall be cleansed
and

and sanctified from the Dross and Filthiness of your Corruptions to such a Degree of Purity and Holiness as will qualify you for those celestial Regions, where ye shall have no worse Company than that of Angels and the Spirits of just Men arrived to the great Perfection of Happiness and Glory.



SERMON

S E R M O N V.

*The SIN and FOLLY of a SOLICITOUS
CARE.*

St. MATTHEW vi. 34.

*Take therefore no Thought for the Morrow: For
the Morrow shall take Thought for the Things
of it self: Sufficient unto the Day is the Evil
thereof.*

UR blessed LORD, having in the former Part of this Chapter given his Disciples and Followers Directions for the right Performance of several Christian Duties, such as Alms-giving, Prayer and Fasting, at *Verse 19*, cautions them against Worldly-mindedness, or a too anxious Care about the Things of this Life.

And this he doth, *First*, From the Consideration of the Shortness and Transitoriness of their Nature, and the many Accidents they are exposed to.

And, *Secondly*, From the observable Influence they have upon our Minds in alienating our Affections from Things that are infinitely more valuable (such as should engross the chiefest Part of our Care) Heaven and eternal Happiness;

ness; and consequently making us unmindful of those Duties which are requisite to the obtaining of them, and which if we would strictly and diligently perform, would we but *seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, all these Things*, i. e. whatever is necessary to our Support and Comfort during the Course of our Pilgrimage here, God would certainly provide for us. *Take therefore* (saith he) *no Thought for the Morrow: For the Morrow shall take Thought for the Things of it self: Sufficient unto the Day is the Evil thereof.*

In handling of this Subject I shall, first of all, endeavour to shew what is here properly meant by our taking *no Thought for the Morrow*, or under what Restriction this Expression is to be held according to the true Design and Purport of our Saviour in the Text.

Now, by taking *no Thought for the Morrow*, we are not to look upon this as spoken absolutely, as though we were to banish all our Care about our worldly secular Concerns. For when he commands us to *seek first the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness*, this plainly intimates that, though this is to be our chief and principal Care, yet the other is not to be wholly rejected, but is very useful and necessary, so it be limited within its regular Bounds.

A provident Care and Diligence is as much recommended in Scripture, and as highly incumbent upon us as any other Gospel Duty whatsoever; nor have we any Reason to expect a comfortable Subsistence without it. *The idle Soul*

Soul (saith *Solomon*) *shall suffer Hunger* ^a, *Vivere in diem*, to live from Hand to Mouth (as we usually term it) without any Thought or Consideration of the Morrow, is the Property of a careless indolent Sot.

The very brute Creatures have so much Foresight and Diligence as to lay up Store of Food in their Repositories for themselves and their young Ones, as is remarkable in the Pismire, which *Agur* ranks amongst the four Things which, "Though, saith he, they are but little, "are exceeding wise," and produceth this as an Instance of her Wisdom, that she prepares her Meat in the Summer ^b, and, therefore, should Man, who is invested with reasonable Faculties, be wanting in this necessary Care, he would debase himself below the Dignity of his Species; nay, would become so very irrational as to be surpassed by those inferior Beings that have nothing but natural Instinct for their Guide, more heedless and improvident than the very Brutes that perish.

We are not to expect to be fed by Miracles: 'Tis enough if God gives a Blessing to our Labours, and prospers the Work which we set our Hands to.

Indeed, in the original State of Things, in the Time of Man's Innocence before the Fall, Nature was so very liberal and indulgent to our first Parents as to supply them with whatever was necessary to their Support and Comfort, without their Care or Pains-taking.

But

^a Prov. xix. 15.

^b Prov. xxx. 24, 25.

But now the Case is quite otherwise. Such a Curse was laid upon the Ground for their Ingratitude and Disobedience to their Maker, that it brings forth little that is useful without Labour and Tillage, and in the Sweat of our Brows are we to eat our Bread. He hath placed us in such a Condition in this habitable Earth, that though it naturally brings forth Thorns and Thistles, yet if we take Care to improve and cultivate it, 'twill be still ready to restore the Fruits of it to our Hands, and furnish us with whatever is necessary and convenient for us.

And as every one is to partake of the Privilege, so ought he likewise of the Pains in bringing it to this Maturity and Perfection. For, as in the natural, so in the political Body 'tis required that the Members should have the same Care one for another, and be mutually assistant to each other in their respective Callings and Employments. Should any one fail in this, St. Paul is for banishing him as an useless and unprofitable Member, and lays this Injunction upon the *Thessalonians*¹, *that if any would not work, neither should he eat.*

So that you see a provident Care is not only allowed, but strictly required of us in Scripture as a Thing absolutely necessary, not only for our own private personal Interest, but for the Support and Benefit of the whole Community.

But the Care, which our Saviour disallows of in the Text, is a carking, selfish, solicitous Care, such as excludes all Trust in, and Dependence

pendance upon God, and Charity and Benevolence to our Fellow-christians: When, instead of seeking *first the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness* (as we are exhorted) we are so very intent upon the Mammon of Unrighteousness as to spend all our Time and Labour in procuring it, so fondly dote on the Treasures and Interests of this World, as though (like the Children of *Gad* and *Reuben*) we were to take up our fixed Abode and Residence on this Side *Jordan*: Whereas we ought to look upon them only as our *Viaticum*, as Helps and Assistances to us in our Way to a better, and value them no more than as they are made instrumental to our Preparation for Eternity.

This is certainly the best and most proper Use we can put them to; and such as would apply them to any other, so limit their Desires to this present State as to look no farther than this Horizon, so devote and dedicate themselves to the Cares and Interests of this Life, as for the Sake of these to cast off all Religion (as if Man's Life consisted in the Abundance of the Things which he here possesseth) not only forfeit their Claim to, and Interest in, the Happiness of another World; but likewise fall very short of their Hopes and Expectations of their present secular Enjoyments in this.

For, though, by their extraordinary Labour and Diligence, they *heap up Silver as the Dust, and prepare Raiment as the Clay*, they may prepare it, but the Just shall put it on, and the Innocent shall divide the Silver, saith *Job**, and

K 2

(as

* Chap. xxvii. 16, 17.

(as the Prophet *Haggai*¹ tells us) *be that thus earneth Wages, earneth Wages to put it into a Bag with Holes.*

Or, on the other Hand, should they think to advance their Interest by any inequitable Means, such as Fraud, Oppression, and the like, and the more effectually to carry on the Cheat, make an outward Shew and Profession of Religion; the just Judge of all the Earth would utterly blast their iniquitous Designs, so infatuate, and defeat their Intentions as to bring them to nothing.

This is a Truth so very apparent, and confirmed by so many Instances that occur to our daily Observation and Experience, that there needs no farther Proof of it. Neither their Pains, nor their Policy are sufficient to guard against the Necessities of Life, which would have been otherwise supplied by the liberal Bounty of his Providence.

Which of you by taking Thought, saith CHRIST, can add one Cubit unto his Stature? And why take ye Thought for Raiment? Consider the Lillies of the Field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his Glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if GOD so clothe the Grass of the Field, which to Day is, and To-morrow is cast into the Oven; if he makes the Beauty of the Flowers which are of such a short Continuance, to exceed the most pompous Splendor and Magnificence of Kings, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little Faith?

Here,

¹ Chap. i. 6.

Here, you see, he sharply rebukes, and will have such a Diffidence and Distrust in God's Providence to be as absurd as impious (such as none but *Heathens* and *Infidels* are guilty of) and beneath the Character of a Christian; who, as he hath received so many repeated Promises from God of Blessings of a much superior Nature, eternal Happiness and Glory in his celestial Kingdom, can he imagine that he will fail to supply him with a competent Portion of the good Things of this Life? He who feeds the Ravens, and clothes the Lillies of the Field, will not suffer Man created after his own Likeness and Similitude, and received into the Covenant of Promise, to want any Thing that is for his real Good and Benefit, if he prove faithful and obedient to him.

If he be otherwise, however he may rely upon his Pains and Policy (as I before observed to you) the utmost Stretch of all human Endeavours will prove wholly ineffectual, without the Concurrence of the divine Favour and Benediction.

For suppose a Man should, to enlarge his Possessions, add Field to Field, and think to raise an immense Treasure from the Fruits and Produce thereof, yet (I pray) from whom is he to expect all this? Is it not from the Hands of God? Whom if he will not look up to for a Blessing, but depends upon his own Might and Power for procuring it, and is resolved to persist in an open Contempt and Violation of his divine Authority and Laws; though he sow much, he shall bring in but little. He that giveth Rain,

both the former and the latter in his Season, will withhold his refreshing Showers, and instead thereof smite both his Fields and Vineyards with Blasting and Mildew, 'till he hath put an End to his imaginary Prosperity, and made all his swelling Hopes and Projects dwindle into Barrenness and a Curse.

But granting he should come in for a more than common Share of these outward Blessings (as Providence often dispenses its Bounty with an indifferent Hand, making his Sun to rise on the Evil and the Good, and sending Rain on the Just and on the Unjust) so that his Barns be filled with all Sorts of Grain in the greatest Plenty and Perfection, and his Presses burst out with new Wine, yet if he hath not an Heart to use, nor Health to relish it, what extraordinary Blessing is there in all this Abundance and Increase?

But, perhaps, it may be said, that if he doth not enjoy it himself, his Posterity may be the better for it. A wise Scheme indeed, to debar ourselves of the Pleasures and comfortable Enjoyments of Life for we know not whom.

The Folly and Vanity of such a Practice the Preacher sufficiently explodes in *Ecclesiastes* ^m. *I hated, saith he, all my Labour which I had taken under the Sun: Because I should leave it unto the Man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise Man or a Fool? Yet shall he have Rule over all my Labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the Sun. Therefore I went about* to

^m Chap. ii. 18, &c.

to cause my Heart to despair of all the Labour which I took under the Sun. For there is a Man whose Labour is in Wisdom, and in Knowledge, and in Equity: Yet to a Man that hath not laboured therein, shall he leave it for his Portion. This also is Vanity and a great Evil. For what hath Man of all his Labour, and of the Vexation of his Heart wherein he hath laboured under the Sun? For all his Days are Sorrows, and his Travel Grief; yea, his Heart taketh not Rest in the Night: And therefore concludes that there is nothing better for a Man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his Soul enjoy good in his Labour; and testifies from his own Experience that this was from the Hand of God. 'Tis a Blessing which God gives to our honest Labour and Diligence, when we enjoy the Fruits thereof with Chearfulness and Alacrity.

But how many are there who frustrate the gracious Designs of Providence by their aspiring and ambitious Views? Not content with the present State and Condition they are in, and which might be abundantly sufficient to make them happy, they think that they should be more so, if they could raise themselves to a more elevated Sphere, could they advance their Fortune to such a Number of Acres, or so much Money in their Purse, they take it for granted that they must then be happy, but never can be so without it.

But how vain is Man, who thus relies upon his own Wisdom and Foresight, though he is

born like a wild Afs's Colt! Whilst he is forming Schemes and Projects for still greater Acquisitions, he shoots over the Mark, and, engaged in an eager Pursuit of what he hath not, quite loses the Enjoyment of what he hath.

Like the hungry Dog in the Fable, who not satisfied with the Piece of Flesh he had in his Mouth, and greedily catching at the Shadow of it (which was in Appearance more substantial) lost the real Substance, and was left to bewail his Folly and Misery with a sorrowful Howl, and an empty Stomach.

Let a Man be never so politick in his Schemes, yea, and his Measures of pursuing them never so just and equitable, yet if he too much dotes and depends upon them as the Ground-work and Foundation of his Happiness, ten thousand to one but he'll be disappointed, and meet with a Bar to the Happiness he designed, whether for himself, or Posterity.

If for himself, he is sure to miss of it; because it only makes him restless and uneasy. For between the Care of getting and Fear of losing, the very Thoughts of his Abundance will not suffer him to sleep.

If it be intended for his Posterity, he hath no Assurance of that neither. For (as the Preacher says) *who knoweth whether he shall be a wise Man or a Fool? Yet shall he have Rule over all his Labour;* such Rule as, were his breathless Ancestor but sensible thereof, would be enough to convince him of the Folly and Vanity of his Labour, his extraordinary Care and Solitude in providing for such an one, and to fill him
with

with Vexation of Spirit, could he see what an ill Use is made of the Prize which he hath put into his Hand. What the wretched Miser hath, with so much Carking and Covetousness, been heaping up together, the prodigal Heir will as merrily spend in Idleness, Luxury and Intemperance.

Thus doth Man (according to the Psalmist's Observation) walk in a vain Shew: He is disquieted in vain: He heapeth up Riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them."

Whereas, would he but make a free and generous Use of them, conformable to the Will of his heavenly Donor, his kind and gracious Benefactor, shew a grateful Sense and Acknowledgment of God's Blessings by thankfully improving them to his own Use, and what he hath to spare from himself and Family, to the Supply of the Wants and Necessities of others, relieving CHRIST's distressed Members, the Poor and Fatherless, and causing the Widow's Heart to sing for Joy; this would be an effectual Means to sanctify his Possessions to him, not only give him a comfortable Enjoyment of them himself, but entail a Blessing and Prosperity upon succeeding Generations.

But the sordid miserable Wretch (who instead of being helpful to others, grudges himself what is necessary and convenient, and amidst the greatest Affluence and Prosperity affrights himself with imaginary Wants) discovers such a Temper as gives a bitter Alloy, not only to his own, but likewise the Comforts of all those who

who have the Unhappiness of being confined to it.

To antedate our Miseries before the Time, and terrify ourselves with the Thoughts and Apprehensions of such Evils as we may never live to see, and of such Wants as we are never like to suffer, is the Way to make ourselves for ever miserable. And therefore our Saviour is not for having us uneasy about the Morrow: *The Morrow*, saith he, *shall take Thought for the Things of it self: Sufficient unto the Day* (the present Day) without anticipating the Morrow's Troubles, *is the Evil thereof*. We have no Occasion to create needless Troubles to ourselves: Perhaps, we may find enough to do to encounter with such as are necessary and unavoidable.

This, I think, is a full Explanation of the Text in every Part of it. In the Management whereof I have endeavoured to keep up to the golden Mediocrity between the Extremes of too much Penuriousness and Parsimony on the one Hand, and too great Profuseness and Prodigality on the other: For not to allow ourselves what is useful in a Time of Plenty, and to be lavish in a State of Poverty, are both very absurd and irrational.

As to the first of these, I have spoken pretty largely upon it in the former Part of this Discourse, being most agreeable to the Design of my Text: And, therefore, shall now beg Leave to speak something of the latter, as not altogether unsuitable to this present Audience.

We can none of us be insensible of the favourable Opportunity kind Providence hath indulged

dulged us with in the extraordinary Plenty we have of late Years enjoyed, of making a competent Provision for our selves and Families.

What Use hath been made of it is very visible to the World; and if I may be allowed the Freedom to deliver my real Sentiments, I believe I may take upon me to affirm, that several amongst us have not transgressed the Commandment in my Text by taking too much *Thought for the Morrow*, have not been over-solicitous about *what they shall eat, or what they shall drink, or wherewithal they shall be cloathed*. So far from this, that I rather imagine from their Idleness and Indolence that they take no Thought at all.

Instead of letting every Day have its proper Portion of their Care, if they can but earn enough by two or three Days Labour in the Week, to spend the rest in Luxury and Pleasure, and indulging their own brutish Appetites, they care not what Distress and Poverty their Families are reduced to. Thus do they by a fatal Chymistry turn God's Blessings into a Curse, and make those very Things which should have been for their Welfare, prove to them an Occasion of falling.

When they see any one go on in a frugal industrious Way, they are ready to ridicule and stigmatize him as fordid and niggardly, which rather than they will be guilty of, like Fools, they overpass the Medium, and run into the quite contrary Extreme of Profuseness and Prodigality.

But

But these poor Wretches would do well to consider that both the Extremes are alike contrary to the Rule of the Gospel, and the same Scripture which bids us, *Beware of Covetousness*,^o tell us likewise that, he that doth not take a necessary Care to *provide for his own, and specially for those of his own House, hath denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel*,^p

There is another Sort that I have somewhat to say to, and I have done, and that is a false, whining, hypocritical Tribe, who out of a counterfeit Zeal of seeking the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and taking upon them the great Work of Reformation, renounce their proper Callings, their secular Employments, and make it their Business to evangelize (as one of their double-inspired Prophets terms it) *i. e.* to wonder from Place to Place, under a Pretence of an inward Call from God, to promote the Interest of the Gospel; tho' at the same Time they broach such Doctrines as tend only to corrupt and alienate Men's Minds from the Simplicity of it.

What, is there no Balm in *Gilead*? Have we no regular Physicians to cure Men's weak and wounded Consciences, and reduce them from the Error of their Ways, but every low Mechanick shall set up for a Teacher and Instructor in Religion? Hath not God appointed a Ministry for this Purpose, Men that are dedicated and set apart for this weighty and important Business, the Furtherance of the Salvation and Welfare

^o St. Luke xii. 15. ^p 1 Tim. v. 8.

Welfare of Men's Souls, without the Intrusion of these bold and arrogant Usurpers? Let every Man abide in the same Calling wherein he was called. Let them follow their lawful Callings (such as they were bred up to) with a modest peaceable Contentment, and endeavour by their honest Labour and Industry to discharge their lawful Debts, and do Justice to every Man with whom they have any Dealings and Intercourse.

This would be much more becoming than to aim at Things that are too high for them, Things that are quite out of their Sphere, and with a pharisaical Pride launch out into ostentatious Boastings of their own Perfections, as the only Men that have the Gift of the Spirit; and in a fanatic Rage and Fury damn and sink all such as favour not their wild enthusiastick Notions, to the very Abyss of Hell with their uncharitable Censures.

These are very improper Evidences of their Inspiration, of the extraordinary Gifts and Qualifications they boast of; and if they have no better Fruits than these to shew for their seeking the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, their Search is evidently in vain and to no Purpose.

Instead of Fraud and Ostentation, of Rancour and Bitterness, let them for their better Instruction hear what the Prophet *Micah* saith, *God hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

This

This is the true Righteousness which God requires, and which every honest Heart, every sincere and upright Christian will naturally find without much seeking. A Righteousness this, and the only one that (joined with CHRIST's infinite Merits) will stand us in any stead at the Day of Judgment; and which, if duly exercised in the Kingdom of Grace, will infallibly conduct us to a Kingdom of Glory.

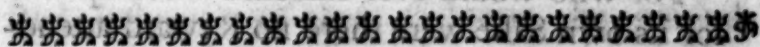


SERMON



S E R M O N VI.

*An. ANSWER to some OBJECTIONS
against the Certainty of a FUTURE
JUDGMENT.*



2 Epistle of St. PETER, Chap. iii. Ver. 3, 4.

3. *Knowing this first, that there shall come in the
last Days Scoffers, walking after their own
Lusts,*

4. *And saying, Where is the Promise of his Com-
ing? For since the Fathers fell asleep, all Things
continue as they were from the Beginning of the
Creation.*

*** HERE cannot be a more effectual
* T * Means made Use of by wicked Men
* * * [the Devil's Agents and Instruments]
to promote the Interest of his King-
dom, and check the Growth and Progress of
Christianity, than the Arguing themselves into a
Disbelief of the most important and fundamen-
tal Truths of our Religion, such as the Doctrine
of the Resurrection, the Immortality of the
Soul, and a future Judgment; in as much as it
roots out the two Master-Passions of the Heart,
Men's Hope and Fear, than which nothing hath
a more prevailing Influence upon the due Regu-
lation

lation of our Conduct, being the strongest Incitement to Virtue, and a necessary Restraint to keep us within the Bounds and Compass of our Duty.

— *Quis enim Virtutem amplectitur ipsam,
Præmia si tollas?*

“For who would ever embrace Virtue purely
“for its own Sake were there no Reward attending the Practice of it?”

‘Twould be very small Encouragement for Christians to persevere in the Exercise of religious Duties, had we not a Prospect of a greater Recompence of our pious Labours than what we generally meet with in this World. Nay, *if in this Life only we have Hope, we are of all Men most miserable.* Because Religion not only debars us of those sensual Delights and Pleasures wherein we should otherwise naturally indulge ourselves, but likewise exposes the Professors of it to Troubles and Persecutions. And therefore those Patrons of Libertinism who will be under no Restraint, but are for indulging to an universal Latitude, represent Christianity as a fruitless and unprofitable Profession; and, to discourage us from adhering to it, strive to invalidate the Truth of those Promises in the Gospel, which make over to us eternal Life and Happiness as the sure Reward of our Fidelity and Obedience.

Such false Prophets and Teachers the Apostle complained of in his Time, and assures his Christian Proselytes both in this and the preceding Chapter,

Chapter, that the latter Ages shall be infested with them, *Men that privily shall bring in damnable Heresies, even denying the LORD that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift Destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious Ways, by Reason of whom the Way of Truth shall be evil spoken of.*

In order, therefore, to keep them stedfast in the Faith, and prevent their coming under the fatal Influence of these Seducers, he reminds them of those exceeding great and precious Promises (as he terms them) Promises in whose Truth and Veracity they might very securely confide, being not made up of cunningly devised Fables, contrived by human Artifice and Invention, but such as are grounded upon the most unquestionable Authority of holy and inspired Men. So that, if they would but hold on in a diligent and regular Discharge of their Duty, they should be assuredly entitled, notwithstanding any wicked Suggestions to the contrary, to a State of Happiness in Heaven, a Happiness so intensely great and infinite, that what Troubles and Difficulties soever they should meet with in their Christian Course, 'twould abundantly recompense both their Labours and their Sufferings.

This he was willing to put them in mind of, not only in his Life-time, but recorded it in his *Epistles*, that having Recourse thereunto after his Death, they might be kept in continual Remembrance of it.

This *second Epistle*, saith he, *Beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure*
L *Minds*

Minds by Way of Remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the Words which were spoken before by the holy Prophets, and of the Commandment of us the Apostles of the LORD and Saviour: Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last Days Scoffers, walking after their own Lusts, and saying, Where is the Promise of his Coming? For since the Fathers fell asleep, all Things continue as they were from the Beginning of the Creation.

Now my Business at present is to endeavour to confute those Objections which are raised against the Doctrine of CHRIST'S coming to Judgment: And to do this as clearly and convincingly as I can, I shall proceed in this following Method.

First, I shall consider who are the Authors of these Objections, and what Character they bear.

Secondly, I shall farther consider the Weakness and Invalidity of those Arguments which are made use of to support them.

And *Lastly*, The Inconsistency thereof with the divine Attributes, *viz.* the infinite Veracity, Justice, and Goodness of God.

And *First*, I shall consider who are the Authors of these Objections, and what Character they bear.

This we have at the very Front of the Text, where they are termed *Scoffers, walking after their own Lusts*: Men of loose and profligate Lives, utterly devoid of all Sense of Religion, that scoff at and ridicule every Thing that is sacred, and, that they may the more freely indulge their corrupt and vicious Inclinations, endeavour to remove out of the Way whatever would

would stanch and hinder the impetuous Torrent of their Luxury and Excess.

"Twould be a mighty Damp to the sensual *Epicure* in the most jovial and brisk Career of his Impieties, to consider that he must appear at the great Day of Tribunal before God and an innumerable Company of Angels, wherein he must give a strict Account of every Thought, Word, and Action, though never so secretly and clandestinely carried on, that is not consonant and agreeable to the Will and Word of God. To prevent which, they strive to put far off from them the evil Day, and, because Sentence against an evil Work is not executed speedily, would argue both themselves and others into a Belief and Persuasion that it shall never be executed.

They will tell you that those Passions and Affections which are implanted in our Nature, were designed for no other End and Purpose than that we should please and gratify them; that if there be such a Being as a God of such infinite Perfections as he is represented, 'tis beneath his Care and Providence to concern himself with the Transactions here below; and that though there is such a Thing talked of as a future Judgment, wherein we must give an Account of the Deeds done in the Body, yet 'tis but a meer Bugbear, an Invention of Priestcraft, something to amuse the Fearful and Ignorant; but the Men of a politer Taste, and superior Judgment, are under no such Apprehension: That there is no visible Sign or Appearance of a Dissolution; that the whole Frame or System of

L 2

Nature

Nature still continues as it was from the Beginning: And as for any Laws (whether divine or human) being guarded with penal Sanctions to deter us from the Breach of them, we see them daily infring'd and violated with the greatest Freedom and Impunity: That such as employ their Wit and Power to defraud, circumvent, and oppress their weaker Brethren, are the Men that chiefly thrive and flourish in the World, and have more than Heart could wish, *i. e.* in short, that the greatest Rogues and Villains come in for the greatest Share of Prosperity and Pleasure.

Now, were this the Case, the sincere and upright Christian might well cry out with *Asaph*, *Pf. lxxiii. 13.* when he was sunk in the Gulph of Diffidence and Despair at the seeming Happiness and Prosperity of the Wicked; *Verily, I have cleansed my Heart in vain, and washed my Hands in Innocency.* But how well grounded this Opinion is, or upon what Foundation of Reason it is built, is what I come now in the second Place to consider.

And here I think it is no difficult Matter to confute them from their own Argument, which is such a ridiculous Piece of Sophistry as miserably betrays the Badness of their Cause, or at least their weak and pitiful Defence of it. Because the Argument they make use of to support this Notion, doth manifestly overthrow it. For here is a palpable Contradiction in the Terms of the Proposition.

If the Fathers are fallen asleep, I would ask, How all Things continue as they were from the Beginning of the Creation? When

When Man was at first created, God inspired him with the Breath of Life, made him an active Creature, endued with Reason and Understanding, whereby he was made capable of Religion, of knowing and serving God, of performing the Will of his Creator by paying a strict and uniform Obedience to the divine Laws, and consequently of promoting the chief and ultimate End of his Creation, *viz.* the setting forth of God's Glory, and securing his own present, but especially future and everlasting Happiness. Such was Man's Activity, such his Capacities and Powers.

But is it so with them from whom this Breath of Life is taken? Do they continue as they were? The Fathers, where are they? And the Prophets, do they live for ever? No sooner did their Breath go forth of them, but they died. and were turned again to their Dust.

But they will say, perhaps, that although there is a Change and Alteration in Man as to the Individuals, yet the Species is still continued by a Succession of Posterity.

But what is all this to the Purpose? What is it to me, when I am gone, who comes after? *What Pleasure, saith Job, hath a Man in his House after him, when the Number of his Months is cut off?* None at all. For then all his Concerns here are entirely at an End, he is utterly excluded from the Affairs of this World, is no longer capable of doing any good in, or receiving any Benefit from it.

And if the Case be so with Man, that he is

quite stript of all the Pleasures and Enjoyments of this present State, and hath no Assurance of future Happiness in the next, he is worse off than any of the rest of the Creatures.

In all Creatures there is a natural Instinct or Desire to be happy; which Happiness all others, as well vegetable as sensible, enjoy by improving their respective Faculties to the utmost Perfection of Sense and Vegetation, which is as much as they require. Whatever is above this they have no Appetite nor Apprehension of, and consequently are happy without it, being incapable, as they are wholly compounded of Matter, of employing themselves about such Objects as are spiritual and immaterial.

Is it then agreeable with Reason or the Nature of Things to imagine that this noble Creature Man, who was made but little lower than the Angels, after GOD's own Similitude, and invested with reasonable Faculties to enable him to discern and pursue his truest Interest, to take a distant View of Things, and have a Prospect of a future State of Happiness in another World, I say, Is it reasonable to suppose that GOD should bestow all these distinguishing Marks of Favour and Dignity upon him, only to bring him into a Fool's Paradise at last, by raising his Thoughts and Desires to what he is never like to attain to, and sink him down to such a Degree of Mortality and Corruption as to confine him to the dark Cells of the Grave, there to be, as though he had not been to lie, rot and putrify, till he is utterly lost in Oblivion like the very Brutes that perish? No. GOD will not be thus unmindful
of

of the peculiar Object of his Love, but hath still a future Recompence in Reserve for him.

As to the Soul of Man, which is of a divine Original, that cannot derive any true Satisfaction from the Pleasures and Interests of this Life, which are all gross, flitting and unconstant, too low for the Entertainment of so refined and excellent a Being. And therefore it is reasonable to conclude that there is further Provision made for it of Things much more agreeable and analogous to the Dignity and Purity of its Nature.

And though he undergoes the common Fate with all earthly Creatures in Respect of the Body, though in the Sight of the unwise this seems to die; yet no sooner shall it be revived and quickened by its Reunion with the Soul at the Sound of the last Trumpet, but, being refined and spiritualized, they shall be caught up together into Heaven, there to partake of the most ravishing Delights and Pleasures, such as are more suitably adapted to the spiritual and immortal Nature of Mankind, that are commensurate with our Existence, and shall last for ever.

And this will be still farther evident, if we consider the contrary Opinion, that there will be no future Judgment, nor Distribution of Rewards and Punishments in another World, is, as I come now to prove, inconsistent with the divine Attributes, *viz.* the infinite Veracity, Justice, and Goodness of God.

And *first*, 'tis inconsistent with God's Veracity, forasmuch as we have through the whole Tenor of the Gospel, which is the Word of

GOD, innumerable Texts of Scripture to ascertain us of the Truth and Certainty of a Resurrection to a future Judgment.

Thus saith our Saviour to the unbelieving Jews, *' Marvel not at this: For the Hour is coming, in the which all that are in the Graves shall hear his Voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the Resurrection of Life; and they that have done evil, unto the Resurrection of Damnation. And St. Paul: Behold, I shew you a Mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a Moment, in the Twinkling of an Eye, at the last Trump (for the Trumpet shall sound) and the Dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. And again. ^u I saw the Dead, small and great, stand before GOD; and the Books were opened: And another Book was opened, which is the Book of Life: And the Dead were judged out of those Things which were written in the Books, according to their Works. And the Sea gave up the Dead which were in it; and Death and Hell delivered up the Dead which were in them: And they were judged every Man according to their Works. For though the Author of this Book of Revelation seems to speak here as of something that was past, yet 'tis to be understood as spoken prophetically of the last and general Resurrection. And many other Places too tedious here to recite.*

So that to deny the Truth of this is (to speak in plain Terms) giving GOD the Lie. But GOD is not a Man, that he should lie, neither the Son

^a St. John v. 28.

^t 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.

^u Heb. ix. 27.

and Revel. xx. 13. 14.

Son of Man, that he should repent: Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? With him is no Variableness, neither Shadow of Turning: But he is the same Yesterday, and to Day, and for ever. His Decrees and Counsels stand fixt and unalterable. Heaven and Earth shall pass away: But his Words shall not pass away.

Because there is the same Appearance of all natural Things as from the Beginning, to infer from hence that Nature shall never be dissolved, is such an absurd and irrational Conclusion as no reasonable and considerate Man can ever be guilty of.

What, are we to set Bounds to the Decrees and Determinations of Providence, or call in Question the Execution thereof, because we have not lived to see it. We, who, as *Job* tells us to check our Pride and Curiosity, "*are but of Yesterday, and know nothing, because our Days upon Earth are a Shadow.*"

The World, since God created it at the first to the present Age we live in, by the best Computation, hath not lasted so much as six thousand Years. And what is all this to frustrate or make void the Immutability of his Counsel in the Dissolution of it. Though it may seem to be of a great Dimension to us, yet it is as nothing, when compared to the Infinitude of the divine Nature, since *one Day is with the LORD as a thousand Years, and a thousand Years as one Day.*

And

And yet, within this small Compass, we shall find, if we look back to ancient Records, that there hath been a Change, yea, and a very dreadful one too, when for the Wickedness of Man God sent an universal Deluge in the Days of *Noah*, whereby the World that then was, being overflowed with Water, perished.

But this, as the Apostle saith, *they willingly are ignorant of*, i. e. they will not know it, being inconsistent with the Interest of their Scheme.

'Tis true, God hath promised that he will no more cut off all Flesh by the Waters of a Flood, but that Nature shall hold on in its regular Course. Yet he nevertheless assures us that *the Heavens and the Earth which are now, by the same Word are kept in Store, reserved against the Day of Judgment*; and that when the Measure of Man's Iniquities shall be fulfilled, and God shall come in the Heat of his Indignation to execute his Fury and Vengeance upon his Adversaries, the World and all Things that are therein shall be destroyed by a contrary Element, and utterly consumed with Fire.

That the World will not last for ever is what the very Heathens were taught by the Dictates of natural Reason, without the Help or Assistance of Revelation. And though *Aristotle* contended earnestly for its being eternal; yet *Plato* and *Pythagoras*, and most of the rest of their Philosophers were of a different Opinion, and would have it that, as all Things were made of corruptible Principles, they would inevitably return to Corruption.

Thus

Thus much we may learn from our own Observation and Experience that Things of the most lasting and durable Matter, are in Time worn away; as we see the hardest Iron is consumed with Rust. And if the Fabrick of the Universe be built of such perishable Materials, where the Parts decay, of necessary Consequence there will be a Dissolution of the Whole.

But *secondly*, That Things should still continue in the same State they now are in, would be inconsistent with the divine Justice, the Property and Character of which is to render to every Man according to his Deeds.

Whereas, there seems to be but little Difference made in the present Execution thereof between the Merits and Demerits of its Object. For as the Preacher observes, * *No Man knoweth either Love, or Hatred, by all that is before them. All Things come alike to all, there is one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked.* Nay, many Times the Wicked have, as to all outward Appearance, the greatest Share of Happiness in this Life; they swim in an uninterrupted Flow of Delights and Pleasures, whilst the Good and Virtuous are oppressed with Miseries and Calamities.

Indeed, if GOD in the strict Severity of Justice had been extreme to mark what we have done amiss, the most Upright of us all would have deserved no better at his Hands than to be extremely miserable.

So happy was Man's Condition under the first Covenant, that, had he continued in his original
State

* Ecclef. ix. 1, 2.

State of Innocence and Perfection, he was to have been translated without dying from an earthly to a celestial Paradise.

But when, through the sly and subtil Insinuations of the *Devil*, he prevaricated from his Obedience to his Maker by tasting of the forbidden Fruit, he no sooner forfeited his Integrity, but he likewise forfeited all his Claim and Title to that Happiness for which he was at first created; and we his wretched Offspring, as we partake with him in Guilt, should be Partakers also of his Punishment.

But God, full of Compassion and Mercy, and ever solicitous for the Good and Welfare of Mankind, was willing once more to try his Obedience, and entered into a second Covenant, wherein he promised that the Seed of the Woman should bruise the Serpent's Head.

A Covenant confirmed and ratified with the strongest Ties and Asseverations. For when God renewed it with *Abraham*, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, *Surely, blessing, I will bless thee, and multiplying, I will multiply thy Seed as the Stars of Heaven, and in thy Seed shall all Families of the Earth be blessed*, i. e. there should spring up one out of his Posterity that should be the Saviour of the World, one, who by his infinite Merits and Satisfaction should release us from the Guilt and Punishment of our Sins, and reinstate us in a Capacity of Happiness and Salvation. So that if we faithfully and diligently perform the Condition of Obedience on our Part, it is God's to fulfil

fulfil the Promises in which he is engaged by Virtue of this Covenant.

And *shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* Did he give the Son of his Bosom to suffer a painful and ignominious Death for our Sakes, and then bereave him of the Travel of his Soul by stripping us of all those Benefits which he hath so dearly purchased for us with the Price of his most precious Blood? Such a Procedure as this is, as I come in the third and last Place to shew, incompatible with God's infinite Goodness.

'Twas this that first contrived, promoted and carried on the whole Series of Man's Redemption. He had no other Motive to concert Measures for accomplishing it than the Impulse of his own Goodness; was under no other Obligation than the Constraint of his Love.

' In this, saith St. John, was manifested the Love of GOD towards us, because that GOD sent his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live through him. And as St. Paul concludes, ' He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, will doubtless with him also freely give us all Things, all Things that are requisite to perpetuate and compleat our Happiness.

Those whom he loveth, he loveth unto the End. And though his Love is not so conspicuous in this present State, but that he seems to behave indifferently to all in some Instances of his Providence; yet when the great Day of Retribution comes wherein he will make up his Jewels, we shall find the Case to be quite otherwise. For then

then he will set upon us such Marks of Distinction, according to our different Behaviour in this Life, that it will be an easy Matter to discern between the Righteous and the Wicked; between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.

That I may no longer trespass upon your Patience, I shall close all with a Word or two.

The Use and Intent of this Doctrine is to revive and establish the true Spirit of Christianity, to restore it where it is lost by Way of Exhortation; and by Way of Encouragement, to confirm and strengthen it in such as have lived under the Guidance and blessed Influences of it.

And I shall address myself, in the first Place, to the loose and profligate Part of Mankind, who walk after the Flesh in the Lust of Uncleaness, and (as you tender your everlasting Welfare and Security) earnestly exhort you to repent. *Let the Wicked forsake his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts: And let him return unto the LORD, and he will have Mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

This is God's own Advice by the Mouth of his holy Prophet *Isaiab*^a, which if you give good Heed and Attention to, so as to be influenced by it, well. If not, but you refuse to hearken to his friendly and repeated Calls and Invitations to Repentance, and are still resolved to persist in your wicked Courses, know for a Certainty there will be a Time when he will call you to a strict Account, and all such stubborn
and

^a Chap. lv. 7.

and incorrigible Sinners, of what Kind soever they be, and severely punish you for your Disobedience and Ingratitude.

For, though you go on with never so much Success and Jollity in your respective Gratifications and Desires, the Malicious in his devilish Enterprises, the wanton Satyr in his Lust, the Tyrant in his Cruelty and Oppression, the Knave in his Craft and Subtilty, the Statesman in his Policy, the sensual *Epicure* in his Pleasure, and the Prophane and Atheistical in his Infidelity, giving no Credit to either the Threats or Promises of the Gospel, and so living in an open Defiance of God's Laws, and Ridicule and Contempt of all Religion; what you will not now believe, you shall be then thoroughly convinced of by sad and woful Experience, and made sensible, when it is too late, of the Miseries which you have brought upon yourselves.

For then there will be an *ultimate Valet* to the Sense of your past Pleasures; it is the Time of Recompence when every Man shall soon know his Doom; for *a short Work will the LORD make upon the Earth.*

Then shall be laid open to your View a most gloomy and dreadful Scene of Horror, when all Nature shall tremble at the Anger of an incensed God: How much greater Agonies then, think ye, must your guilty Souls be in, at whom the Fierceness of his Indignation is chiefly levelled.

Then you will tremble to such a Degree (like guilty *Beshazzers*) at the Effusion of the Vials of God's Wrath, that your Knees shall smite
one

one against another and in a terrible Fright and Consternation call to the Mountains to fall upon you, and to the Hills to cover you. But in vain shall ye fly to these for Refuge: Neither the Earth nor Heavens can shelter you from his Fury: For the Earth shall be clean dissolved, and the Heavens shall pass away with a mighty Noise, as a Scroll when it is wrapt together, and those glittering Orbs, that adorn and beautifie the spacious Canopy with their Lustre, being hurled into Confusion, the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat, and yourselves shall be deservedly thrust down into the infernal Pit, there to undergo the most exquisite Torments out of which there is no Redemption, the incessant Gnawing of a never-dying Worm, and the scorching livid Flames of unquenchable Fire.

But as for you on the Right Hand, who have regulated your Lives by the Rule of God's Commandments, and used your constant and sedulous Endeavours to discharge your Duty, take Courage, and lift up your Heads, for your Redemption draweth nigh.

God is not unrighteous, to forget your Work and Labour of Love: And what Discouragements soever ye meet with from the World to hinder you from persevering in the Practice of it, tho' it is your Lot to suffer Tribulation, yet, if ye endure the Cross, ye shall obtain a Crown, especially if ye suffer for Righteousness sake, he will exalt you to a most eminent Degree of Happiness.

He

He hath committed all Judgment unto the Son, who will duly execute the same to the unspeakable Advantage of all true and faithful Christians; and as he hath inchoated and carried on by what he hath done and suffered for you, so will he with the strictest Rules of Justice, Tenderness and Fidelity, compleat the Work of your Redemption.

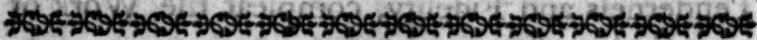
In his Father's House are many Mansions, whither he is gone to prepare a Place for you; where though he may seem to you to tarry long, he will not leave you comfortless, but will certainly come again, and receive you to himself, that where he is, there ye may be also, and (as Heirs of God, and joint Heirs with CHRIST) for ever partake with him of the Reward of the Inheritance in the Kingdom of your heavenly Father.





S E R M O N VII.

A CHRISTMASS SERMON.



REVEL. xxii. 16.

*I am the Root and the Offspring of DAVID, and
the bright and morning Star.*

✽✽✽✽ O open a clear Way to my Text;
✽ T ✽ we are to look back to the Begin-
✽ ✽ ning of the preceding Chapter,
✽✽✽✽ where St. John, who wrote the
Book of the Revelation, gives us
an Account of a Conference that was held with
him, and which was begun by a Voice from
Heaven, that he that spake to him sat upon the
Throne, who appears in the Sequel of the Story
to be the Son of God.

At Verse 4. 'tis said, that God shall wipe a-
way all Tears from our Eyes; and there shall be no
more Death, nor Sorrow, nor Crying, nor Pain:
For the former Things are passed away. And in
the next Verse, he that sat upon the Throne,
said, Behold I make all Things new. The Mean-
ing of which is, that at the End of the World,
when Nature shall be dissolved, there shall be
another Face of Things than what is here,
when we shall enter into a new State of Life,
adorned and illustrated with quite different Qua-
lifications.

As

A CHRISTMASS SERMON. 163

As a Preludium to this happy State, St. *John* tells us at Verse 9. that there came to him one of the seven Angels, which had the Effusion of the Vials of God's Wrath, and talked with him, saying, *Come hither, I will shew thee the Bride, the Lamb's Wife.* And (as it follows) the Angel carried him in the Spirit to a great and high Mountain, whence he gave him a Prospect of the heavenly *Jerusalem*, of which we have a large Description from Verse 11. of the 21st Chapter to Verse 6. of this 22^d.

This Account the divine Penman was to transmit to Posterity in Writing, that by the amiable Description which he gives of this holy City, whereinto no unclean Thing can enter, we might be stirred up to the greatest Diligence (as the Time draweth near) to qualify and prepare ourselves for it.

For this Book of the *Revelation* is to close the History of the Gospel, and to shew every Man that according as his Behaviour hath been, either conformable to, or dissonant from this divine Canon, so he shall be consigned over by the Judge of all the Earth to a State of endless Happiness or Misery.

At Verse 6. the Person that first spake to St. *John* renews the Conference with him, and to fix this good Man's Attention to what he had seen and heard, and to give it the greater Force and Efficacy, he speaks thus, *These Sayings are faithful and true.* And the LORD GOD of the holy Prophets sent his Angels to shew unto his Servants the Things which must shortly be done. *Behold, saith he, I come quickly.* The

End or Design of his Coming he further declares at Verse 12. It is to Judgment. *Behold, I come quickly, and my Reward is with me, to give every Man according as his Work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.* Here he shews the Eternity of his Existence, that as he was before all Time, so he shall still exist, when Time shall be no more.

At Verse 16. out of which I have chosen my Text, he thus proceeds; *I Jesus have sent mine Angel to testify unto you these Things in the Churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright and morning Star.*

Here he touches upon the Mystery of his Incarnation by terming himself *the Root and Offspring of David*. For how he can be the Root and Offspring of the same Person, here lies the Mystery.

To undertake fully to explain this to you would be a very foolish and presumptuous Attempt. For could I do this, it would be no longer a Mystery. But I shall endeavour to put it in as clear a Light as I can, so far forth as is consistent with Reason and Revelation.

And, first of all, I shall endeavour to shew you in what Respect he is the Root of *David*.

The Expression is metaphorical, and alludes to a Tree or Plant, whose Root in Priority of Nature is before the Buds or Branches that spring from it.

The Root, when it is put into the Ground, by that Nourishment which it derives from it, produces an Offspring, from whose Seed, by the

Series

Series of a natural Production, spring forth others of the same Kind.

This among Vegetables, such as Trees and Plants, I call a natural Production or Increase, which amongst human Race and other Animals is carried on by a natural Generation, when by the Conjunction of Male and Female they propagate their Species, and produce an Offspring of the same Nature with themselves.

By this univocal Causality (as the Schoolmen call it) the first *Adam*, who was formed out of the Dust, and consisted of a Soul and Body, was the Root of all his Posterity.

But this cannot be applicable to our Saviour, neither ought we to have such gross and carnal Notions and Conceptions of him as to think that he is the Root of *David* by a natural Generation.

Till his Incarnation or Coming in the Flesh, which was long after *David's* Time, he was a Being purely spiritual and immaterial; and 'tis inconsistent with Reason and the Nature of Things to imagine, that such a Being as this, so refined and intellectual, should by a natural Generation produce an Offspring of a fleshly corporeal Substance, as Man is.

No, he is the Root of *David* in a more sublime and elevated Sense, not by a natural Generation, but by a divine and supernatural Power, which he exercised in the original Creation and Formation of Mankind.

The *Arians*, who deny the Divinity of our Saviour, will have it that he was not from everlasting, that there was a Time when he was

not, that he was made for our Sakes, that God by him, as by an Instrument, might create us, and that, had he not been, God had not been moved to create us.

An Assertion this, equally absurd and blasphemous. For here you see they make him no more than an Instrument subservient to our Creation; whereas God had no Occasion for Tools and Instruments to work by, who by a Word speaking produced all Things out of nothing. For (as the *Psalmist* asserts of all Creatures in general) *He spake the Word, and they were made, he commanded, and they were created.*

Besides, to admit him into the Work of the Creation, and then to strip him of his divine Power, without which he could never be capacitated for that Work, doth manifestly shew the Weakness of their Argument, if we consider what this great Work of the Creation is. 'Tis (as I before observed) a producing Something out of Nothing.

To form a Thing out of pre-existent Matter is no more than what Man can do, as *the Potter hath Power over the Clay* to bring it into what Shape soever he pleaseth.

But to produce a Thing out of Nothing, to form that new-created Substance into the Shape and Figure of a Man, and inspire it with the Breath of Life, is a Work compatible to none but God, a Being of divine and infinite Perfections, a Power no less than Omnipotence It self.

And

A CHRISTMASS SERMON. 167

And that this Power was attributed as well to the Son as to the Father is evident from St. Paul's Testimony, where he tells us that ^c by him were all Things created that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, visible and invisible, whether they be Thrones, or Dominions, or Principalities, or Powers: All Things were created by him, and for him. And he is before all Things, and by him all Things consist. For that he spake this of the Son is plain and manifest from the preceding Verses. And in the first Chapter of St. John's Gospel, ^d In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the Beginning with God. All Things were made by him (not as an instrumental, but efficient Cause) and without him was not any Thing made that was made.

If CHRIST were no more than an Instrument in the Creation, what Need was there of the Father's consulting him about it, as he seems to do? saying, ^e Let us make Man in our Image, after our own Likeness.

An Instrument is left entirely to the Guidance and Direction of the Operator that makes use of it. But from the Father's consulting with the two other Persons in the Trinity in the Work of the Creation, 'tis manifest that they had either of them an equal Power with the Father himself.

St. Cyril in his Remarks upon this Text speaks thus: ^f " Here Moses ascribes the Ho-
M 4 " nour

^c Col. i. 16, 17.

^d Verse 1, 2, 3.

^e Genesis i. 26.

^f Οὐ γὰρ περιωρίσεν εἰς τὸν πατέρα μόνον, ΕΞC. CAT. 10.
Pag. 202.

“ pour of the Deity as well to the Son as to the
 “ Father, to shew that Man is the Creature and
 “ Workmanship, not only of the Father, but
 “ also of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.” For
 (as according to what our Saviour tells the
Jews^s, speaking in Reference to himself) *the*
Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth
the Father do, so neither can the Father with-
 out the Co-operation of the Son; who though
 they are personally distinct, yet by Reason of
 the indivisible Unity of their Nature are equally
 concerned in every Action; and therefore, *What*
Things soever the Father doth, these also doth the
Son likewise.

Agreeable hereunto are the Words of St.
Hilary. ⁿ “ Forasmuch as God the only begotten
 “ Son of the Father, was concerned in the
 “ Works that were wrought by his Father’s
 “ Power, he claimed the same Power to him-
 “ self; of doing whatever his Father could do,
 “ whose Nature and Essence was inseparable
 “ from the Son, as he had obtained it by Right
 “ of Birth and Inheritance.”

Thus you see both from Reason and Scrip-
 ture, and the concurrent Testimony of the Fa-
 thers, that CHRIST was the Root of *David* in
 no other Sense than as he was an omnipotent
 God, the Creator and Governor of all Things.

And how this infinitely glorious and eternal
 Being became the Offspring of *David* is Matter
 of our second Enquiry.

So

^s *John v. 15.*

ⁿ *Cum unigenitus Deus paternæ virtutis, &c. l. 7. de Trinitate.*

A CHRISTMASS SERMON. 169

So great was his Humility and tender Compassion for Mankind, that though he was *in the Form of God*, and *thought it not Robbery to be equal with God*; yet for us Men, and for our Salvation, who by the original Transgression of our first Parents, and the many actual ones which we have since been guilty of, were rendered obnoxious to everlasting Misery, *he made himself of no Reputation, took upon him the Form of a Servant, and was made in the Likeness of Men*; that by the strict Obedience of his Life, and the meritorious Sufferings of Death, he might rescue and deliver us both from our Guilt and Punishment.

To which Purpose he chose to be born of a pure and immaculate Virgin, one that miraculously conceived him in her Womb, not by any carnal Copulation, but by the Obumbration of the holy Spirit of God.

This is a great Mystery, such as our natural Reason could never have comprehended, had it not been revealed to us in the Scriptures. And therefore we have Reason to cry out with the Apostle, *O the Depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out!*

Thus we read, St. Luke^{*}, that at the Angels Salutation of the blessed Virgin, he spake to her in these Words, *Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy Womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call his Name JESUS.*

But

^{*} Rem. xi. 33.

^{*} Chap. i. 30, 31.

But the Virgin, staggered at the seeming Impossibility of the Thing, answered, *How shall this be, seeing I know not a Man?* To which the Angel makes this Reply; *The holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the Power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: Therefore also that holy Thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of GOD.*

This is no more than what the Prophets foretold should be, as you may find, *Jer. xxxi. 22. The LORD hath created a new Thing in the Earth, a Woman shall compass a Man.* And *Isaiab vii.* when *Abaz* King of *Judah* distrusted God's Promise of Deliverance from his Enemies, GOD by the Mouth of his holy Prophet offered to confirm it with a Sign. *Ask thee a Sign of the LORD thy GOD, &c.* Which when he refused to ask, the Prophet rebuked him for his Incredulity, and said, *Hear ye now, O House of Jacob, is it a small Thing for you to weary Men, but will ye weary my GOD also? Therefore the LORD himself shall give you a Sign. Behold, a Virgin shall conceive, and bring forth a Son, and shall call his Name Immanuel. Butter and Honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the Evil, and choose the Good. For before the Child shall know to refuse the Evil, and choose the Good, the Land which thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her Kings. And again¹. Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the Government shall be upon his Shoulder: And his Name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty GOD, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace: Of the Increase of his Government and*
Peace

¹ Chap. ix. Verse 6, 7.

A CHRISTMASS SERMON. 171

Peace there shall be no End, upon the Throne of David and upon his Kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with Judgment and with Justice, from henceforth even for ever. All which Prophecies were fulfilled in CHRIST's Incarnation and Nativity.

Which will be further evident, if we look back to those Prophecies which mention the particular Circumstances of the Time, and Place, when, and where, he should be born.

As to the Circumstance of the Time, we have that from *Jacob's* Prophecy, when he was blessing his twelve Sons. ^m For when he comes to *Judah*, he tells him that *the Scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a Lawgiver from between his Feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the Gathering of the People be.* And ⁿ (as Ecclesiastical History informs us) the Jewish Principality did not cease till *Herod*, who was an Alien, took the Government upon himself, under which our Saviour CHRIST was born. And as to what follows, *unto him shall the Gathering of the People be*, this Part of the Prophecy was verified by the Accession of the Gentiles.

And as to the Circumstance of the Place, turn to *Micah* v. 2. *Thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the Thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth to me, that is to be Ruler in Israel.* And if you consult with the Evangelists, they will tell you that he was born there.

That he was of the House of *David* is clear, not only from the Predictions of the Prophets, but from the Genealogy of CHRIST °, where *Joseph*,

^m Gen. xlix. 10. ⁿ *Enf. Eccl. History*, l. 1, c. 7. ° St. Matt. i.

Joseph, to whom his Virgin-mother was espoused, is represented to be a Descendent from *David* after the Line of Nature, or the Rule limited in the Law. And if so, then the blessed Virgin must be of the same Tribe or Family. Because it was not allowed under the *Jewish* Law that any should marry one of a different Tribe.

This is no more than what even the Scribes and Pharisees confest, when our Saviour asked them, *What think ye of CHRIST? Whose Son is he?* They say unto him, *The Son of David.* He saith unto them, *How then doth David in Spirit call him LORD, saying, The LORD said unto my LORD, sit thou on my Right Hand, till I make thine Enemies thy Footstool.* If *David* then call him LORD, how is he his Son? This put them to a Puzzle, so that they were not able to answer him.

They had no Notion of his Priority of Existence from his divine Nature, as appears from their Behaviour to him^a; where we read that when he told them, *Before Abraham was, I am,* they were so enraged, that they took up Stones to cast at him.

They expected a *Messias*, one that should exercise a temporal Power (though he had assured them that his *Kingdom was not of this World*) and that should appear with great Pomp and Splendor. And because our Saviour appeared in a quite different Manner amongst them, very mean and obscure, they disowned him for their *Messias*,

^a St. *Matt.* xxii. 42, 43, 44, 45.

^a St. *John* viii. 59.

Messias, and looked upon it as a Piece of Blaphemy, when he said, *I am the Son of GOD* *.

An Instance thus of an incurable Blindness and Infatuation. For if the *Pharisees* and Doctors, who pretended to be learned in the Law, had but impartially viewed and considered the prophetical Writings concerning him, they might have easily gathered from those very Texts of Scripture that prove him to be the Offspring of *David*, that he, who was better than the Angels, was of a Nature infinitely superior to that of *David*, whose Offspring he was.

Thus *Jer. xxiii. 5. Behold, the Days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute Judgment and Justice in the Earth. In his Days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: And this is his Name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.* And *Isaiab ix. 7. above-cited, Of the Increase of his Government there shall be no End.* And *Psaln xlv. 7. Thy Throne, O GOD, is for ever and ever.* And again *Pf. lxxii.* which though it be intituled a *Psaln* for *Solomon*, yet what is there literally spoken of *Solomon* hath a mystical Sense couched under it that hath Relation to CHRIST, who was to descend from him, as appears from several Passages therein which cannot be properly applied to any earthly Potentate.

Besides, the stupendous Miracles which he wrought, and which he had Recourse to for the

* *St. John x. 36.*

the Proof of his Divinity^{*}, such as feeding a vast Multitude with five Loaves and two Fishes; stilling the Raging of the Sea; casting out Devils; healing the most malignant and inveterate Diseases with a bare Word or Touch; raising the Dead to Life; and (which was the greatest Miracle of all) what he wrought upon himself by quickening his own Body at his Resurrection; one would imagine should have been sufficient to convince the most hardened Infidel of his divine and infinite Power, and (though he appeared amongst them visible as a Man) that he was also God.

Thus have I shewed you in what Sense CHRIST may be said to be *the Root and Offspring of David*. He was the Root of *David* in Respect of his Divinity, and he was the Offspring of *David* in Respect of his Humanity.

He knew the Necessity of his taking our Nature upon him to accomplish the great Work of our Redemption. For had he been God, and not Man, he could not have suffered. Had he been Man, and not God, he could not have satisfied. And therefore he became Θεάνθρωπος, the God-Man, that by the Union of the two Natures (the divine and human) he might both suffer and satisfy for the Sins of the whole World.

I now proceed to make good his other Appellation, and to shew you why he is called *the bright and morning Star*.

Now this, like the two former, viz. *the Root and Offspring of David*, is metaphorically spoken,

as

* St. John x. 25, 38.

A CHRISTMASS SERMON. 175

as whatever the Nature and Attributes of God allude to, is to be understood either by Way of Metaphor, or Analogy.

For so great are the Excellencies and Perfections of the divine Nature, that we are at a Loss for Words to express them. And therefore, God, in Condescension to the Weakness of our Capacities, vouchsafes to make Use of such Terms in Scripture as are agreeable to our sensitive Faculties.

And tho' what is obvious to our Senses comes very short of, and cannot adequately express God's infinitely transcendent Lustre and Glory, yet the more splendid and glorious any Thing is, the greater Resemblance it bears to him who is *the Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person.*

For which Reason he makes Use of such Kinds of Similitudes, when he calls himself *the Light of the World*; and in my Text *the bright and morning Star*. And in *Malachi iv. 2.* the Prophet styles him *the Sun of Righteousness*. Very apt Allusions to him whose kind Office it was to *bring us out of Darkness into his marvellous Light*, as these heavenly Constellations release us from the dismal and melancholick Scene of Obscurity by ushering in the Day, and introduce us through the gradual Increase of their Lustre from its first Dawning to its meridian Brightness.

Grotius compares it to a Person's coming out of a Den, where the nearer he approaches to the Mouth of the Cave from the dark and dismal Recesses of it, the more he sees of the
Light.

176 A CHRISTMASS SERMON.

Light. So the further a Man advances from a State of Heathenism, or Judaism, to Christianity, the more the true Light of the Gospel breaks in upon him.

Before this Light and Revelation of the Gospel, *Jews* as well as *Gentiles* (notwithstanding they had the Advantage of the divine Oracles) were far from arriving at a full Discovery of the Truth, forasmuch as Things were represented to them under such dark Types and Shadows as rendered them very obscure and unintelligible, till *the Day-spring from on high* did visit them.

But as thick Fogs and Exhalations in the Morning are scattered by the vigorous Beams of the Sun, so no sooner did this *Sun of Righteousness arise*, but he dispelled the dark Ceremonies of the *Mosaick* Law, took off the Vail of Ignorance from their Hearts, and gave them a clearer and more perfect Knowledge and Practice of their Duty.

By his Doctrine, Example and Miracles, he gave the strongest Evidences of the Truth of his Commission, that he was no Cheat or Impostor, but the promised *Messias* that was come to be the Saviour of the World. A Doctrine wisely calculated for the Improvement of moral Virtues, as appears from his excellent Sermon in the Mount ^u, and which set forth their Duty to them in so clear a Light, that 'twas impossible it should escape their Intelligence, unless they wilfully shut their Eyes against it. An Example strictly conformable thereunto through his spotless

^u St. Matt. v.

A CHRISTMASS SERMON. 177

spotless Innocence and Integrity of Life, and backt with such inimitable and surprizing Operations, that (as I said before) one would imagine should have been sufficient to convince the most hardened Infidels of their Errors, and confirm and establish them in the Truth of his Religion.

Nay, so great an Effect it had upon the very Devils themselves, that they were awed and terrified at his Presence, and forced to own and confess him to be *the Son of God*. And the grand Deceiver of Mankind, when he found he could no longer impose Error for Truth, was so baffled and disappointed in his mischievous Devices, that he retreated with Shame and Confusion. For if you will give any Credit to History, it will tell you, that no sooner was CHRIST exhibited, but the Heathen Oracles, through which the Devil carried on the Cheat, were all on a sudden so universally silenced, that (as one saith) " *Ne unum quidem superfit*, there is not so much as one of them left."

Thus were all the Powers of Darknes subdued and vanquished at the Appearance of this bright Luminary, being wholly unable to endure the Splendor and Glory of his incomparable and most sovereign Perfections.

To apply and conclude.

The preceding Doctrine, which shews in what Respect our Saviour is *the Root and Offspring of David*, is not only a Confutation of the *Arian* Heresy before spoken of, which objects against his Divinity; but likewise serves to

N

condemn

condemn that brutish Sect the *Gnosticks*, who deny his Incarnation, that he was born of the blessed Virgin, representing it as a meer Fiction and Counterfeit, quite contrary to all the Testimonies of it in Scripture, not only the Predictions of the Prophets, but the Shepherds, and the *Magi*, the former of which were led by the Directions of an Angel, and the latter by the Guidance of a Star, to the very Place of his Nativity, and were Eye-witnesses of it.

Now for any to imagine that these Witnesses should have such Intelligence from above by God's ministering Spirits, that a whole Choir of Angels, when these glad Tidings were communicated to the Shepherds, should strike up with such a Seraphic Harmony to congratulate Mankind upon this auspicious Birth, and all this to carry on a Cheat and Imposture, is very extraordinary indeed, setting very light by sacred History. But if we consider from whence it comes, the Character which * *Epiphanius* gives of these Hereticks will add no Weight or Credit to their Assertions, who are for allowing no Doctrine to be true but what comports with the Interest of their Lusts and Sensualities.

Wherefore, dismissing this, proceed we in the third and last Place to consider him in his other Relation, as the *bright and morning Star*, i. e. (as hath been interpreted) our Guide and Instructor, that hath brought us out of *Darkness and the Shadow of Death*, a State of Ignorance and Error, from the *Power of Satan to the living God*.

To

* *Ep. contra Hæreses, l. 1.*

A CHRISTMASS SERMON. 179

To prevent our relapsing into the Snare of this Tempter, and that we may not be ignorant of his Devices, CHRIST hath given us a clear and perfect Revelation of the divine Will, what Duties God requires us to perform as the indispensable Condition of our Happiness.

A Transcript whereof we have in the sacred Volumes of the Scriptures, which were written for our Instruction, to be the standing Rule both of our Faith and Practice. And, to keep us to a strict Conformity to this Rule, we there find that he hath used his most earnest and sedulous Endeavours by Example, by Exhortation, by Doctrine, to render us perfect and complete in all the Will of God.

And therefore, such as forsaking this Rule, to follow the Bias of their corrupt and vicious Inclinations, bring a Blot and Scandal upon their holy Profession by a debauched and wicked Life; or, under a Pretence of an inward Light or Inspiration, set up their own wild enthusiastic Notions in Opposition to God's revealed Will, are utterly inexcusable; the one for their Profaneness; the other for their Hypocrisy; and both for their vile abominable Ingratitude.

But however they may reject CHRIST and his Doctrine, they would do well to consider that this *Alpha and Omega*, who is now our Saviour, will hereafter be our Judge; and then what a severe Sentence are they to expect from him, who frustrate all the kind and gracious Methods he hath made use of to bring them to Happiness, by their wilful Obstinacy and Infidelity!

If Men will be so perverse and obstinate as to

close their Eyes against the clearest Evidences of the Truth, and slight these favourable Opportunities of being instructed in their Duty, they may grope at Noon-day as in the Night, till at length God gives them *the Spirit of Slumber, Eyes that they cannot see, and Hearts that they cannot understand.*

That this may not be our Lot, let us be cautious of going astray in such pernicious Errors, as God hath given us his Word for a Lamp and a Light to us; instead of rejecting, let us thankfully embrace the Privilege which he hath put into our Hands, and cheerfully resign up ourselves to his unerring Conduct and Direction.

While we have Light, let us believe in the Light, that we may be the Children of Light. Let us have an Eye continually upon this Star by which we are to steer our Course, and follow him as our sure Guide, our trusty Convoy; and then he will not fail to bring us to those happy Regions where, in a most eminent Degree of Brightness, upon us will the Light shine. A Light inaccessible to us whilst we are in this frail corruptible State, till *this Corruptible shall have put on Incorruption, and this Mortal shall have put on Immortality.*

And when our Nature shall be thus refined and spiritualized at the last and general Resurrection, he will send his guardian Angels, who will swiftly convey us to his heavenly Kingdom, where there shall be no Night, no Need of a Candle, neither Light of the Sun, being illuminated with the Splendor and Glory of the blessed Trinity, for the LORD GOD will give us Light, and we shall reign for ever and ever.

SERMON



S E R M O N VIII.

A SERMON ON EASTER-SUNDAY.



EZEKIEL xxxvii. 3.

Can these Bones Live?

 IS an usual Thing among the Prophets to have an Eye to something further than what they literally express, a mystical Sense couch'd under their Writings, that relates to somewhat of much greater Importance than what is signified in the literal Acceptation of them.

For whereas most of the Prophetical Writings under the Law make mention of only temporal Blessings, yet they point and shadow out to us such as are of the greatest Concern, spiritual and eternal Ones.

Thus the Deliverance of the Children of *Israel* from under the *Egyptian* Yoke is a Type of our Christian Passover, and our Church hath appointed that Portion of Scripture to be read upon this Festival, to remind us of our own Deliverance from the Thralldom and Misery we were under by reason of our Sins, from the Bondage

and Slavery of Corruption into the glorious Liberty of the Children of God.

And so likewise what is spoken in this Chapter, wherein the Prophet by the Resurrection of dry Bones foreshews the Certainty of such as were carried Captive to *Babylon*, and their Return to their former State of Freedom and Liberty, may be looked upon as a Prefiguration of Man's Deliverance from Death, to which we must be all held Captives, when at the general Resurrection we shall be released from the dark Prisons of the Grave, since what is here made use of as a Type of *Israel's* Restoration from their Captivity, is a lively Description of the Resurrection, as you may find, if you will but attend to the Words of this Prophecy. The Hand of the LORD, saith he, was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the Midst of the Valley which was full of Bones, and caused me to pass by them round about, and behold, there were very many in the open Valley, and lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of Man, can these Bones live? And I answered, O LORD GOD, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, prophesy upon these Bones, and say unto them, O ye dry Bones, hear the Word of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD GOD unto these Bones, Behold, I will cause Breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. And I will lay Sinews upon you, and will bring up Flesh upon you, and cover you with Skin, and put Breath in you and ye shall live, and ye shall know that I am the LORD. So I prophesied as I was commanded: And as I prophesied, there was a Noise, and behold a Shaking, and the Bones came together, Bone to his Bone. And when

A SERMON, on Easter-Sunday. 183

when I beheld, lo, the Sinews and the Flesh came up upon them, and the Skin covered them above; but there was no Breath in them. Then said he unto me, prophesy unto the Wind, prophesy, Son of Man, and say to the Wind, Thus saith the LORD GOD, Come from the four Winds, O Breath, and breath upon these Slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the Breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their Feet, an exceeding great Army. Then he said unto me, Son of Man, these Bones are the whole House of Israel; Behold, they say, Our Bones are dried up, and our Hope is lost, we are cut off for our Parts. Therefore prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the LORD GOD, Behold, O my People, I will open your Graves, and cause you to come up out of your Graves, and bring you into the Land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your Graves, O my People, and have brought you up out of your Graves, and shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own Land; Then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD.

Now that there is something more intended in this Prophecy than a bare temporal Deliverance, is plain from the evangelical Promises in the following Part of the Chapter. For whereas the House of Israel was in the Days of Rehoboam divided into two separate People, and was farther divided and dispersed among other Nations in their present State of Captivity, God promiseth, by the Mouth of his holy Prophet, to gather them from among the Heathen whither they were

184 A SERMON on Easter-Sunday.

driven, and to bring them into their own Land, that they shall be no more two Nations, nor divided into two Kingdoms, but that one King shall rule over them^y, that David his Servant shall be their King^z.

Now 'tis certain this cannot be taken in a literal Sense, because *David* was dead many Years before this Prophecy was delivered: But 'tis spoken mystically of CHRIST, who was of the Posterity of *David*, and, according to God's Promise, to sit upon his Throne. And, as it follows, *they all shall have one Shepherd*, i. e. all the faithful Part of them shall be gathered together into one Fold, the true Christian Church. Moreover, *"I will make a Covenant of Peace with them, it shall be an everlasting Covenant*, i. e. the free Covenant of Grace, or State of Liberty under the Gospel, in Opposition to the grievous Yoke and Servitude of their Law: A Yoke so very grievous, that they had Reason enough to say in a spiritual Sense, *Our Hope is lost, we are cut off for our Parts.*

It enjoyed a perfect unfinning Obedience to its Command, without yielding any Assistance to discharge them; and yet threatened them with the severest Punishments upon their Non-performance of them.

But CHRIST, *who is become our high Priest, hath redeemed us from the Curse of the Law, being made a Curse for us*, and hath introduced a better and more advantageous Covenant in its Stead, established upon better Promises, and which are made attainable upon the much easier Terms of a sincere, though imperfect, Obedience. If we fall

^y Verse 21, 22.

^z Verse 24.

^a Verse 26.

A SERMON on Easter-Sunday. 185

fall short of that Perfection of Obedience which the Law required, the Guilt of our Imperfections are thoroughly *washed away in the Blood of CHRIST*, joyned with a true Repentance and Reformation. He by the infinite Merits of his Sufferings hath made sufficient Expiation for our Sins, and delivered us from that eternal Death and Destruction which are the Wages and Consequents thereof, and, by the Power and Virtue of his Resurrection, hath restored us to our own Land, hath not only rescued us from the Power of the Grave, but likewise opened a Way to eternal Life and Happiness for all that believe in him, all the *Israel of God*.

And, therefore, taking the Words of my Text in this Light, as having Respect to the Resurrection of our Bodies, I shall answer the Question that's propounded in them in the Affirmative, *viz.* that these Bones can live; and shew,

First, The Possibility of a Resurrection, since there's nothing in it but what is very feasible to the Almighty Power of God.

And then proceed, in the *second* Place, to prove the Certainty of it, and that because the infinite Justice of God requires it.

The *first* Part of my Undertaking is to shew the Possibility of a Resurrection, since there is nothing in it but what is very feasible to the Almighty Power of God.

He that by a Word speaking created all Things out of the empty Bowels of Nothing, and formed them out of a confused undigested Lump of Matter, dividing them into their several

ral Species, which he ranged in their proper Stations, in the exactest Order, with most admirable Beauty and Contrivance, and among the rest formed Man out of the Dust of the Earth; when his Body returns to its Dissolution, its elementary Principles of which it was compounded, what Difficulty is it to him, who created all Things out of nothing by the Word of his Power, by the same Power to restore it out of pre-existent Matter to its own Shape and Figure, and by its Reunion with the Soul animate it with that Breath of Life wherewith it was at first inspired?

Should any one deny God's Power to do this, I would answer him in the Words of St. Cyril,

Εἶδες γὰρ ὁ θεὸς τὴν αὐτὴν ἀτίσιαν, ἐν τοῖς παλαιμένοις σπυρίοις ἀνάσσειν ἐκ γένεσος καὶ ἐνανθρώπου, ἴσα βλέπων τὰ ἐν τοῖς αἰνύχοις, καὶ περὶ τῶν ἐμψύχων λογικῶν πεισεύσῃ, 1. c.

God seeing thy Incredulity, causeth a Resurrection in such Things as are visible to thee, "that what thou seest in inanimate Beings, thou mayest likewise believe the same of those that are rational."

For if we make a due Observation of Things that are inanimate, we may see a Kind of Death and Revival in them, which may serve to remind and convince us of our own approaching Dissolution and Restoration to Life.

For Instance, Day dies into Night, and springs again in the Morning. The Flowers, which fade and wither in the latter Part of the Year, revive at the Return of Spring, and look gay and flourishing. The Moon, whole Light in

its

its declining State dwindles away to nothing, is suddenly renewed again, and increaseth to the Full. And many such like Changes and Revolutions we may observe in the common and ordinary Course of Nature, and which may properly be looked upon as Emblems of the Resurrection.

But the most lively and remarkable one is the *Phoenix*. 'Tis a Bird that (as there is never but one living of the Sort) comes once in fifty Years to *Heliopolis*, a City in *Egypt*, where having built a Nest in open View of the Inhabitants, by the violent Motion of her Wings causeth such an Heat as sets the Nest on Fire, and out of the Ashes, into which her Body is totally consumed by the Flames, there's a Worm ingendered, which in three Days Time grows to a young *Phoenix*. This Relation, however fabulous and fictitious some would have it, is back'd with no worse Authority than that of *Epiphanius*, *St. Cyril* and several of the rest of the Fathers, and which is not only an Emblem of the Resurrection, but likewise a very apt Allusion to our Saviour's rising on the third Day.

But if you will believe what is written by Inspiration of the Spirit of God, hear what the Holy Scriptures say concerning it. The Prophet *Job* in the 14th Chapter, bewailing of Vanities and Miseries of this Life, yet comforts himself with the Hope of a Resurrection to a future State of Happiness in another World, which shall abundantly recompence all his present Afflictions and Calamities. *There is Hope*, saith he, *of a Tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout*

*sprout again, and that the tender Branch thereof will not cease. Though the Root thereof wax old in the Earth, and the Stock thereof die in the Ground; yet through the Scent of Water it will bud, and bring forth Boughs like a Plant^c. If a Man die, shall he live again? Doubtless he shall. If God shews so much Regard for a Tree, as, when it is cut down, to revive and quicken it, much more will he do so for Man created after his own Image and Likeness, and received into the Covenant of Promise, and therefore he testifies his Belief of it by a Patient looking for the Time in the Words that follow, *All the Days of my appointed Time will I wait, till my Change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: Thou wilt have a Desire to the Work of thine Hands.**

St. Paul, in answer to such as objected against the Doctrine of the Resurrection, speaks thus: *But some Man will say, How are the Dead raised up? And with what Body do they come? Thou Fool, saith he, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die^d. And from hence take Occasion to shew that the Body, though in the Grave it be made subject to Worms and Corruption, shall rise again, and that with very considerable Improvements, from a frail, weak, corruptible Body, to a much more glorious and incorruptible.*

But, after all the Objections that are made by the Adversaries of this Doctrine, what can they say in Opposition to Experience and plain Matter of Fact? We read of several in Scripture that have

^c Verse 7, 8, 9, 14. ^d 1 Cor. xv. 35, 36.

A SERMON on Easter-Sunday. 189

have been actually raised to Life, viz. the Widow's Son of *Zarephath* by *Elijah*^e; the Son of the *Shunammite* by *Elisha*^f; the dead Man, who at the Invasion of the *Moabites*, was cast into the Sepulchre of this great Prophet^g; where it is said, that, *When the Man was let down, and touched the Bones of Elisha, he revived and stood upon his Feet.* And in the New Testament the Widow's Son of *Nain*^h; *Jairus's Daughter*ⁱ; *Lazarus*^k; all these by our Saviour. *Tabitha* by St. Peter^l. *Eutychus* by St. Paul^m. Since therefore some have been raised again, as appears by the several Instances I have produced, this is abundantly enough to evince the Possibility of it.

But, perhaps, it may be objected that none of these had been any considerable while dead, before they were restored to Life: Most of them had not been buried, and those that had, viz. the Man that was cast into the Sepulchre of *Elisha*, immediately revived, as soon as he was put into his Grave; and 'tis said that *Lazarus* had been buried but four Days, which was not long enough for his Body to return to a Dissolution. But when the Body hath lain so long as to be dissolved into Dust, that Dust, into which it is mouldered, is at the Opening of the Grave so mixed and blended with that of other Men's Bodies, that how can it be raised again the very same Body that it was before?

But one Objection started by our Adversaries against the Doctrine of the Resurrection, and which

^e 1 Kings xvii. 22. ^f 2 Kings iv. 34, 35. ^g Chap. ii. 13, 21.
^h St. Luke vii. 14, 15. ⁱ Chap. viii. 54, 55. ^k St. John xi. 43, 44.
^l Acts ix. 40. ^m Chap. xx. 10, 12.

which they think a very formidable One, is this. A Man that dies at Sea hath his Body devoured by Fishes, which Fishes, when they are taken, are carried into several distant Counties, and become the Food of other Men; so that the Flesh of that Man which the Fishes have fed upon, is transfused into the Substance of their Bodies by whom these Fishes are eaten; and how can the Parts of that Body which are at so great a Distance from each other, be brought together again, so as to constitute the same numerical Body, especially when they are changed into the Substance of other Men's Bodies? And this they will have to be an invincible Argument against the Resurrection of the Body.

Now, such as raise this Objection should consider, that he who is to perform this great Work, is not Man, but God, which how difficult and impracticable soever it may seem to our feeble and narrow Conception, though it may appear impossible to us, yet with God all Things are possible. To him all the Nations of the World are but as a Drop of Water, or as a Grain of Dust: They are as nothing before him, nay, are counted less than nothing. He comprehends the Dust of the Earth in a Measure, whereof every individual Atom is naked and open to his all-seeing Eye, without the least Mixture or Confusion. So that if the Parts of our Bodies were scattered over the Face of the whole World, how widely soever they were dispersed, or what Revolutions soever they had gone through, he could easily collect them again, and place them in their regular Order and Position.

And

And as to the other Objection, *viz.* their being transfused into the Substance of other Mens Bodies, in answer to this I must tell you, that such as have studied the Nature and Constitution of the Body, make a Distinction between the solid and fluid Parts of it. As to the solid Parts, such as the Bones and Nerves, that are essentially necessary to its Composition, who will take upon him to affirm that these are devoured? And even of the fluid Parts, supposing farther still that a Man were immediately devoured by the *Anthropophagi*, a Kind of savage Monsters that with a more than bestial Cruelty prey upon their own Species, yet so little of these would by natural Digestion be changed into the real Substance of their Bodies, that the very Effluvia that fled from him by Perspiration would furnish Matter abundantly enough to supply a Defect so very small and inconsiderable.

As to any Change or Diminution of the Substance of our Bodies, this is no more than what we may observe in them when they are living. We see how a Man's Body is washed and altered by the Decays of Nature, by Age, Hunger, Sickness, &c. but will any from hence deny it to be the same Body that it was, when in the more thriving and flourishing State of Youth, Health, and Prosperity: No more do the Changes it goes through in its State of Separation disprove the Resurrection of the same numerical Body.

Job witnesseth his firm Perswasion and Conviction of the Truth of it. ^a *I know, saith he,*
that

^a Chap. xix. 25, 36, 37.

that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter Day upon the Earth. And though after my Skin, Worms destroy this Body, yet in my Flesh shall I see GOD: Whom I, idem qui sum, as the Latin expresseth it, i. e. the same as I am now, shall see for myself, and my Eyes shall behold, and not another; though my Reins be consumed within me.

But I would ask such as deny a Resurrection, For what Purpose were those Persons before-mentioned, *viz.* *Jairus's Daughter, Lazarus,* and the rest raised again? Was it not to manifest the Almighty Power of GOD, and for the Confirmation of the Truth of his Religion? And if GOD raised them for the Sake of Religion, and the Propagation of the Gospel, which are only a Means conducive to some great End, *viz.* Man's eternal Welfare and Happiness, will he be wanting to excel the same Power for the Accomplishment of the End itself, by raising us to that State of Happiness and Salvation? But this naturally leads me to the *second* Thing I undertook to perform, which is to prove the Certainty of a Resurrection, and that because the infinite Justice of GOD requires it.

And this I shall make appear to you from these three following Particulars.

First, From the Nature and Condition of GOD's Covenant with Man.

Secondly, From our Saviour's Resurrection, and the mystical Union which is between CHRIST and his Members.

And *Lastly,* From the Distribution of future Rewards and Punishments.

My

A SERMON on Easter-Sunday. 193

My *first* Argument, to prove the Certainty of a Resurrection, is drawn from the Nature and Condition of God's Covenant with Man.

When our first Parents were tempted by the sly and subtle Insinuations of the Devil to prevaricate from their Obedience to their Maker, God, out of his infinite and undeserved Goodness, immediately enters into a Covenant, where in he promiseth that *the Seed of the Woman shall bruise the Serpent's Head*; that although they were now foiled and worsted by his Temptations, yet one should issue from her Posterity, who, by his prevailing and sovereign Perfections, should subdue and vanquish all the Powers of Darkness, and rescue fallen Man from the Plagues and Miseries that ensued upon his Disobedience and Transgression. One of which, and that a very terrible one, was Death, which at the first was no necessary Condition of human Nature, because had not Man sinned, he had never died, but had been translated without dying, from an earthly to a celestial Paradise. No, but 'twas a Punishment inflicted on him for his Disobedience in tasting of the *forbidden Fruit*. For, whereas God had commanded him not to *eat of the Fruit of the Tree which was in the Midst of the Garden*, he nevertheless, unmindful of this Prohibition, did presume to eat of it. God accordingly pronounces upon him the Sentence of Mortality, as you may read, *And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the Voice of thy Wife, and hast eaten of the Tree of which I commanded thee, saying,*

^a Gen. iii. 15.

^p Gen. iii. 17, 18, 19.

ing, *Thou shalt not eat of it, cursed is the Ground for thy Sake; in Sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the Days of thy Life. Thorns also and Thistles shall it bring forth to thee: And thou shalt eat the Herb of the Field. In the Sweat of thy Face shalt thou eat Bread, till thou return unto the Ground; for out of it wast thou taken: For Dust thou art, and unto Dust shalt thou return.*

And this fatal Sentence extended not only to Adam, but to all his Posterity; the whole Race of Mankind that ever descended, or are to descend from him, are naturally subject to this universal Law of Mortality. There were never but two, viz. *Enoch* and *Elijah* (and who are recorded in Scripture as extraordinary Instances) that were exempted from it, and to which, as a fixt and standing Law of Nature, they as well as other Men, without such an uncommon and supernatural Instance of the divine Favour, must have necessarily submitted. For *as by one Man Sin entered into the World, and Death by Sin; so Death passed upon all Men, for that all have sinned,* saith *St. Paul*. Since therefore Death was inflicted upon Mankind as a Punishment for Sin, he, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, as he hath obtained Remission of our Sins by making Expiation for the Guilt of them, will release us also from their Punishment.

It would be but a small Privilege to a Malefactor to receive a favourable Sentence from his Judge, if, notwithstanding this, he were still kept in durance. Nor should we have any reason

son

A SERMON on Easter-Sunday. 195

son to think that our Sins were remitted, unless Death, which is the Wages of them, were destroyed. This would not be according to God's Promise in the Covenant, who, as he is a God of infinite Power, Goodness, and Veracity, will never promise any thing but what he's both able and willing to perform. Of Man indeed it may be said, that the Serpent hath bruised his Heel; but I cannot see how it could be so truly affirmed on the other Hand, that Man hath bruised his Head, without a Frustration of his mischievous Devices, or that we have gained a Victory or Conquest over him through CHRIST, were we to be still held Captives to his Tyranny. So that 'twould be as it were charging God with a Breach of Covenant, and not only so, but likewise derogating from the infinite Merits of our Saviour, to think that the Satisfaction which he the Second *Adam* hath wrought for us is not altogether as effectual to Salvation, as the Sin of the First was to the Misery and Destruction of Mankind.

Neither would it be at all agreeable to St. Paul's Assertion, at the 20th Verse of the above-cited Chapter, that *where Sin abounded, Grace did much more abound*. Abound in what? This he explains at Verse 17th, *If by one Man's Offence Death reigned by one; much more they which receive Abundance of Grace, and of the Gift of Righteousness, shall reign in Life by one, JESUS CHRIST. For as in Adam all die, even so in CHRIST shall all be made alive*.

He, who *tasted Death for every Man*, hath by the Merits of his Sufferings destroyed Death, and him that had the Power of it, *i. e.* the Devil. For though, according to God's fixt and unalterable Decree, as we were originally taken out of the Dust, so to Dust we must all necessarily return, and surrender our Bodies as Prisoners to the Grave, yet he hath procured for them a general Release from their Imprisonment, according to that triumphant Exultation, *• I will ransom them from the Power of the Grave; I will redeem them from Death: O Death, I will be thy Plagues; O Grave, I will be thy Destruction; Repentance shall be hid from mine Eyes.*

But *secondly*, That our dead Bodies shall be raised again is certain from our Saviour's Resurrection, and the mystical Union which is between CHRIST and his Members.

Now this is plain and evident from the very Nature of Things. For *if CHRIST our Head be risen*, we that are his Members shall certainly follow him, according to that Saying of his, *• I, if I be lifted up from the Earth, will draw all Men unto me.* For though it is said in the next Verse, that *he spake this of his Death*, yet it may be likewise very applicable to his Resurrection. And again he thus speaks of himself, *• As the Father raiseth up the Dead, and quickeneth them: Even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.* And that the Resurrection of our Bodies is necessarily consequent to his rising, the Apostle shews us, *• If CHRIST be in you, if ye are made*

• Hosea xiii. 14.

• Chap. v. 21.

• St. John xii. 32.

• Rom. viii. 10, 11.

made one with CHRIST, by Virtue of this mystical Union, and are enlivened and actuated by his Spirit, *the Body is dead, because of Sin; but the Spirit is Life, because of Righteousness.* But if the Spirit of him that raised up JESUS from the Dead, dwell in you; he that raised up CHRIST from the Dead, shall also quicken your mortal Bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. And ² he lays so great a Stress upon this Argument, that (as he there insinuates) we may as well against Experience deny the Resurrection of CHRIST, as call in Question the Truth of our own Resurrection, and seems to ground the Truth and Reality of his upon this Supposition, that we shall be raised again. Now, saith he, if CHRIST be preached that he rose from the Dead, how say some among you, that there is no Resurrection of the Dead? But if there be no Resurrection of the Dead, then is not CHRIST risen. And if CHRIST be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your Faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false Witnesses of GOD; because we have testified of GOD, that he raised up CHRIST: Whom he raised not up, if so be that the Dead rise not. For if the Dead rise not, then is not CHRIST raised, &c. But, as it follows, ³ Now is CHRIST risen from the Dead, and become the first Fruits of them that slept. For since by Man came Death, by Man came also the Resurrection of the Dead.

We read ² that at our Saviour's Crucifixion and Death the Graves were opened, and many Bodies of Saints which slept arose, and came out of the Graves after his Resurrection, and went into

O 3

¹ 1 Cor. xv.

³ Verse 20, 21.

² St. Matt. xxvii. 52, 53.

the Holy City, and appeared unto many. Now, if the Resurrection of CHRIST were then of such Force and Efficacy as to loosen the Bands of Mortality, and bring them up out of their Graves, did the Power and Virtue of it from that Time immediately expire? Did the Bodies of those Saints, as some think they did (see *Pet. Mart.* on this Text, *p.* 514.) return to their dark Chambers of Death, never to rise again? Did they appear for no other End than as an idle Phantom, just to amuse the Sense of the Spectators, and not rather as a manifest Sign or Proludium of the last and general Resurrection. A great many more Texts might be produced out of Scripture for the Proof of it; but these I have already mentioned are so very clear and convincing, that I think it is altogether needless: And, therefore, dismissing this, shall proceed to the *third* and *last* Particular, wherein I am to prove the Certainty of a Resurrection from the Distribution of future Rewards and Punishments.

For *shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* He hath promised, according as we behave ourselves to him, either pay or refuse Obedience to his Commands, to reward or punish us with everlasting Happiness or Misery. Which must be as well in our Bodies, as Souls. Because as they are both alike concerned in Sin and Duty; so are they equally entitled to the Rewards or Punishments that attend them.

As to Sin, that the Body as well as Soul is concerned in it, is too well known by Experience to need a Proof. Nay, 'tis not only concerned

cerned it-self in committing it, but it likewise prompts and stirs up the Soul to many Evils, which it might not otherwise have thought of. For Instance, a wanton and lascivious Thought, which is very often suggested to the Mind by the Pleasure of our corporeal Senses; and a Mind under such a corrupt Influence is called a carnal Mind ^a, because 'tis so wrought upon by the carnal and sensual Part of our Nature, and is affirmed to be *Enmity with God*.

And as to those very Evils which have their first Rise and Birth in the Mind, if the Body, when they are suggested to it, like an incestuous Harlot, readily yield to and comply with that Suggestion, 'tis plain and evident it approves of it. So that the Body, either by Instigation, or Consent, is accessary to the Evils that are committed by us.

And if so, 'tis but reasonable that the Body, which was a Partner in the Guilt of Sin, should share likewise in its Punishment: As also, on the other Hand, it should be rewarded for those virtuous Actions that proceed from it.

But there are some Duties, such as Fasting and other Acts of Mortification, that have a more special Relation to the Body, which, as it bears such a considerable Part in the Duty, 'twould be very unequal if it should not participate of the Reward.

There was no great Inducement to the Martyrs and primitive Christians to resign up their Bodies to such Tortures, such painful and cruel Deaths as were inflicted on them, unless they

O 4

had

had a Prospect and Assurance of a future Reward for their Sufferings. *If in this Life only they had Hope, they were of all Men most miserable, saith St. Paul^b; because Religion not only debarred them of those sensual Pleasures which they might have otherwise enjoyed, but likewise exposed them to the sharper Sufferings which they were to endure in Defence and Vindication of it. And^c if after the Manner of Men I have fought with Beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the Dead rise not.*

Now, some think that they are furnished with a sufficient Reply to this, because the Bodies of those Saints, when they lie in the Grave, as they have no Sense of Pleasure, so neither have they of Pain or Misery: Whereas their Souls are raised to such a Perfection of Happiness in Heaven as makes sufficient Amends for all the Sufferings which they endured in this Life.

But to this I answer in that Saying of *Tertulian*, "*Quomodo felices, si ex parte perituri?*" i. e. "How can they be happy, if they are to perish in one Part of their Nature?" 'Tis certain they cannot be compleatly happy; and yet God would have them to be so in both Parts, not only in their Souls, but Bodies: Which whatever they have done in his Service, or whatever they have suffered for his Sake, shall both, for their Actions and their Sufferings, be sure to be rewarded with a suitable Recompence.

Thus our Saviour^d. *The Hour is coming, in the which all that are in the Graves shall hear his Voice, and shall come forth, they that have done Good,*

^b 1 Cor. xv. 19.^c Verse 32.^d St. John v. 28, 29.

Good, unto the Resurrection of Life; and they that have done Evil, unto the Resurrection of Damnation. And St. John * speaking prophetically of the last and general Resurrection, gives this Description of it: *The Sea gave up the Dead which were in it; and Death and Hell delivered up the Dead which were in them: And they were judged every Man according to their Works.* He doth not say every Soul, but every Man, which consists both of Soul and Body.

CHRIST hath suffered for us in both Parts; and hath he not wrought our Deliverance in both? As to the First, think what a Condition must his Soul be in, when he had taken upon him the Iniquities of us all, under how insupportable a Burden of Sorrow. So great was his Terror at the Apprehension of God's Wrath levelled against him, that it threw him into such bitter Agonies in the Garden as forced whole Showers of Sweat from him; and upon the Cross, like one in utter Despair; and under a final Dereliction of the divine Favour, he pours out his Soul with this most exceeding bitter Cry; *My GOD, my GOD, why hast thou forsaken me?* †

And as to that corporeal Death which is inflicted on us as a Punishment for Sin, he hath made sufficient Expiation for the Guilt of Sin by what he hath suffered in the Body. For Instance, his being beaten with Rods; his having his Hands and Feet, the more tender and finewy Parts of them, nailed to the Cross; his Side pierced with a Spear, till blushing Streams flowed from the bleeding Wounds: Sure then he

* Rev. xx. 13.

† St. Matth. xxvii. 46.

he may well claim that as his Right, which he hath so dearly purchased to himself with his most precious Blood, *to wit*, the Redemption of our Bodies.

Wherefore, to conclude, since God hath been so very kind and gracious as to restore fallen Man to his forfeited Privilege of Life and Happiness; and our loving Saviour hath done and suffered so much for us, that he might re-instate us in a Capacity of enjoying it; if we have any Sense of Gratitude to our Benefactor, and as we consult and tender our everlasting Welfare and Security, let us follow the Advice of the Apostle, * and *cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God.* And forasmuch as CHRIST hath redeemed and purchased both our Souls and Bodies to himself for no other End or Intention than to make them happy, let us stir up all the Powers and Faculties of both to a diligent Pursuit of that End, and constantly and habitually employ them in his Service, and to his Glory. And then at the great Day of Retribution, when we shall be called up out of our Graves by *the Voice of the Archangel, and the Trump of God*, we shall attain to the Resurrection of the Just, and have our *perfect Consumption and Bliss both in Body and Soul in his eternal glorious Kingdom.*

2 Cor. vii. 1.

SERMON

S E R M O N IX.

A SERMON ON WHIT-SUNDAY.

I St. JOHN iv. 1.

Beloved, believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they are of God: Because many false Prophets are gone out into the World.

WAS the subtle and cunning Artifice
of the Devil, that grand Deceiver of
Mankind, to contrive the Fall and
Ruin of our first Parents, by setting off
a specious Lie for the Truth, which he hath
been very active and industrious ever since to
accomplish in their Posterity, by stirring up his
Agents and Instruments so to confound Men's
Notions of the Nature and Difference of Good
and Evil, as to render them utterly unable to
discern between the Spirit of Truth, and the
Spirit of Error: Men, who the more effectually
to bring about their mischievous Intentions, put
on an artificial Disguise of Sanctity, and trans-
forming themselves into the Apostles and Mini-
sters of CHRIST, do, out of a vain hypocritical
Pretence of arriving to a greater Degree of
Knowledge, Purity and Perfection than others,
easily impose upon the Unwary and Ignorant,
who,

who, whilst they are eagerly bent upon following these *ignes fatui* as their Guides, to give them Light and Direction in their Duty, and safely conduct them in the Ways of Holiness and Happiness, are insensibly drawn aside into the quite contrary Path that leads to everlasting Misery and Destruction.

Thus it was in the Apostle's Time, at the first Promulgation of the Gospel, in the infant State of Christianity. For we find him in my Text warning Christians, whom he stiles with his usual *παιδες*, *Beloved, not to believe every Spirit*, i. e. not to be over credulous, in giving a too free and ready Assent to the Doctrines of all such as should set up for Teachers and Instructors in Religion, but to beware of them, to have a strict Guard upon themselves, or else they are in great Danger of being seduced. For the Reason he assigns for it is this, *viz. because many false Prophets are gone out into the World*.

By the false Prophets, which the Apostle hints at in this Place, are meant the *Gnosticks*; a Sect, that (as *Epiphanius* observes) like our modern Enthusiasts, boasted much of the Spirit, of a certain Light within them, which gave such a sanctified Turn to their whole Conduct and Behaviour, that they could never do amiss: Though this unerring Spirit of theirs did in no wise manifest it self as such, neither in their Faith, nor Practice.

As to the former, they gave sufficient Proofs of their Infidelity, in denying the Incarnation of the Son of God, and which the Apostle here alledges as an evident Proof and Demonstration,

tion, that the Spirit, by which they were influenced, was not of God, was not divine, but Antichristian. *Hereby, saith he, know ye the Spirit of GOD: Every Spirit that confesseth that JESUS CHRIST is come in the Flesh, is of GOD. And every Spirit that confesseth not that JESUS CHRIST is come in the Flesh, is not of GOD: And this is that Spirit of Antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come, and even now already is in the World*^h.

And, as to their Practice, how could they be deemed to be under the Influence of God's Holy Spirit, who were so remarkably addicted to the Works of the Flesh? Turning the Grace of God into Lasciviousness, as St. *Jude* speaks of them, V. 4. of his Epistle, as well as denying the LORD JESUS CHRIST, into the Indulgence and Gratification of their Lust and Sensuality, of which the above-cited Author gives a large and particular Account, and that in such unheard of, such unnatural Instances, as I should blush to mention, and you to hear.

These are they, who, according to St. *Peter's* Description of them, ¹ *walked after the Flesh in the Lust of Uncleanness, having Eyes full of Adultery, and that cannot cease from Sin; beguiling unstable Souls; an Heart they have exercised with covetous Practices; cursed Children.*

And therefore, that Christians might not be brought under any fatal Delusion by the corrupt Influence of those Impostors, the Apostle in my Text prescribes a Remedy to prevent it, which is not to take any Thing upon Trust, but to search and examine into the Truth of it. A

^h 1 John iv. 2. 3.

¹ 2 Epistle ii. 10, 14.

A Caution that was never more necessary than in the present Age, wherein there are so many crafty and ill-designing Men, whose Works are attended with all *Deceivableness of Unrighteousness*, as St. Paul terms it, * in that they put such a false Gloss upon their Actions as to make them seem virtuous and exemplary, when in Reality they are quite otherwise. *Fallit enim vitium specie virtutis et umbrâ*, says Juvenal. "Vice is used to impose upon us under the "Mask of Piety and Virtue." So that should we trust to Appearance only, and look no farther than the Outside of Things, we are sure to be deceived. And therefore, to guard against any such Deceit or Imposition, we must, as I told you before, search and examine into the Nature and Quality of Men's Actions, their Drift and Tendency, before we subscribe to them as good, as fit and reasonable to be performed.

Now, in order to this Search and Examination, 'tis necessary that there be some fixed and standing Rule, whereby we may come to a clear and exact Discovery of the Truth. And in this we are not to rely upon our own Judgments, which, by Reason of the Variety of Men's Opinions, whereof few or none of them may be in the Right, would be no Rule at all, or at best a very uncertain one.

For we are naturally very blind and ignorant as to the Things of the Spirit; and not only so, but partial as well as ignorant. Men are apt to form their Judgment of Things according as their several Interests lead them: So that, were

we left to the Determination of our own corrupt and depraved Judgments, 'tis to be feared we should respect rather Interest than Truth, and side with what would make for the Indulgence and Gratification of our Lusts, our carnal and sensual Appetites, rather than what tends to the Honour of God, or the Furtherance and Advancement of true Piety and Religion.

Since, therefore, we are thus incapable of discerning the Truth, by Reason of the Corruption and Depravation of our Nature, we have no other Way to come to the Knowledge thereof than by the Help of Revelation, *i. e.* as 'tis revealed to us in the Scriptures: Which, though they are many Times misinterpreted, according to Men's various Conceptions that arise from their Ignorance or Prejudice, yet the Truth is still one and the same, stands fixt and unalterable, yea, and very discernable too to every tractable and ingenious Mind. They are, as the wise Man asserts, *All plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find Knowledge.*

'Tis this then, *viz.* the Holy Scripture, that is to be the sole and adequate Rule of our Enquiry, both as to Men's Faith and Manners: A Rule prescribed to us by the most unquestionable Authority. For since, as St. Paul tells us, *All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God*, whatever we there meet with is to be looked upon as authentick and true, a perfect Transcript of the divine Will, whereby all the Actions of our Lives are to be regulated; which, so far as they are adapted to this Rule, are good and justifiable,

¹ Prov. viii. 9. ² 2 Tim. iii. 16.

ble; and so far as they deviate from it, are vitious and unwarrantable.

This is that good old Way which the Prophet *Jeremiah*ⁿ adviseth us to walk in, if we would find Rest to our Souls; and such as, forsaking this, strike into a new Track, and vent any new fangled Doctrines which are not agreeable to the true Christian Faith, but tend to corrupt and alienate Men's Minds from the Simplicity of the Gospel. However they may boast of I know not what Spirit within them, 'tis certain it cannot be the true Spirit of God; because that is never so inconsistent with it self as to stir up Men to act contrary to its own Dictates and Directions.

They may, indeed, palliate their ill Designs under the usual Cloak or Semblance of Religion. They may pretend to extraordinary Gifts above other Men; as what will not some Men in their Pride and Arrogance pretend to? They may pretend to Inspiration, and, under this Pretence, may advance any wild enthusiastical Notions in Opposition to the revealed Will of God. But then such Pretenders as these are no better than errant Cheats and Impostors; and ought to be rejected as such.

And yet we see how this Spirit of Enthusiasm hath prevailed even amongst ourselves. The bold Efforts that have been made by some, and the Success they have met with, as appears from the Multitude of their Followers, do evidently demonstrate the Strength and Power of their Delusions. So they do but advance something
old new,

new, 'tis sufficient: And though the Doctrine, which they deliver be never so contrary to Truth, and the known Rules and Precepts of the Gospel, 'tis but to set them off with a gracious Whine, or Cant, and this will be wonderfully taking with the Populace, who, out of a blind inconsiderate Zeal, are ready to raise them up to somewhat more than human, and lavishly break forth into even blasphemous Commendations of their Excellencies.

Did I say, their Followers are ready to raise them up to somewhat more than human? Why, one of these great Prophets advances still higher; and is ready to raise up himself (pardon the Expression) to somewhat more than divine.

For when he talks, in the ostentatious Character he gives of himself, of God's Spirit appealing to our Understanding for the over-ruling the Will, what is this but to make human Understanding superior to the Spirit of God? The very Notion of an Appeal implying a Superiority of Judgment in the Person to whom the Appeal is made. When (God knows) we had need rather to apply to his Holy Spirit for Directions and Assistance in our Duty, to open the Eyes of our Understanding, that we may understand the Scriptures, to enable us to discern what the Will of God is, as it is revealed in his Word, and to supply us with suitable Measures of Grace and Ability to perform it.

This is the only Way of keeping our Wills under a due Government and Subjection. Whereas, should we resign up ourselves to the sole Dictates and Directions of our Understand-

ing, this, alas! (as I before observed) would, in our present State of Degeneracy and Corruption, prove but a very blind Guide to us, and, instead of over-ruling the Will, be in great Danger of being over-ruled by it, of following the Bent of its vicious Inclinations: And then, pray, what would be the Result and Issue of all this? I defy the most profess'd and errant Deist to advance any Doctrine of more pernicious Consequence, or more destructive of Christianity?

For, if those, who talk so much of the Indwellings of the Spirit, can but carry on the Pursuit of their corrupt and vicious Inclinations under the Notion of a spiritual Influence, what Mischief may not such Men do? They may authorize the most unjustifiable and irregular Practices, which when they are at any Time guilty of, and you ask them, how they came to do so and so; they will tell you, 'twas by the Impulse of the Spirit within them, of which they have a sensible Feeling, *i. e.* in other Terms, 'twas as the Spirit moved them.

But, pray, let us examine a little into the Fruits of this Spirit. Now the Spirit of God, or (which is the same) the Holy Scriptures, that are dictated by it, enjoin us, if we would copy after the Example of our Blessed Saviour, to be *meek and humble* °; *not to think too highly of our selves* ^p; *but in Lowliness of Mind to esteem each other better than our selves* ^q. And doth the Spirit move them to lanch out with a Pharisaical Pride, beyond all the

° St. Matt. xi. 29.

^p Rom. xii. 3.

^q Phil. ii. 3.

the Bounds of Truth and Modesty, into an ostentatious Boasting of their pretended Excellencies and Perfections, such as their early Piety, extraordinary Wit and Sagacity, and what not? And to depreciate the Labours of one of our most eminent Divines, representing his Works as containing nothing in them of true Christianity, and bringing the learned Body of the Clergy, for which our Nation is remarkably distinguished, so very low, as to give out that there are not above two or three amongst them that understand so much as their ignorant and deluded Followers? How intolerably insolent and aspiring is vain Man through the Abundance of his Self-conceit! And yet, at the same Time, what a mean Spirit must they discover, who are puffed up with such a vast Opinion of themselves, because they are sought after and admired by a giddy Multitude? We may with as much Reason give Credit to the fictitious Story of *Orpheus*, and judge of the Skillfulness and Melody of his Strains from the Woods following him, as for those Men to set a Value upon themselves, or their Doctrines, from the Attendance and Admiration of such senseless and injudicious Hearers.

Again, the Holy Scriptures enjoyn *that there be no Divisions amongst us, but that we be perfectly cemented together in the same Mind, and in the same Judgment;* and endeavour to keep the *Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*. And doth the Spirit move them to raise Factions and Divisions in the Church of God? And, when

P 2

they

* 1 Cor. i. 10.

* Ephes. iv. 3.

they should be standing up in her Defence and Vindication against all Opposers; doth it stir up her own Sons to deal so treacherously by her, as to desert and betray her to her avowed and professed Enemies?

But further, the Holy Scriptures enjoyn us *to be subject to the higher Powers*¹; and *to do all Things decently, and in order*². And doth the Spirit move them, even beyond the Limits of a Toleration, and after the most solemn Declaration they have made, that they will conform to the excellent Liturgy of our Church, as it is by Law established, to draw People (when they should attend at their regular Devotions in the Place that is consecrated and set apart for God's Worship and Service) out into Fields and Commons, and there, contrary to all Order and Decency, vent any extempore Effusions to the gaping Crowd, and poison and infect their Minds with their pernicious Doctrines?

Again, the Holy Scriptures enjoyn such as are spiritual, to restore a lapsed Brother *in the Spirit of Meekness*³, i. e. though he be actually found guilty, not to behave towards him with too great Severity and Contempt, but rather commiserate his Infirmities, and endeavour, by the most gentle and engaging Methods, to win him over to a true Repentance and Reformation. And doth the Spirit move them, instead of exercising this Meekness and Charity, to pronounce Anathemas, not only against the Guilty, but also such as are of, perhaps, greater Integrity

¹ Rom. xiii. 1.

² 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

³ Galat. vi. 1.

riety than themselves, only because they don't exactly tally with them in their Sentiments?

Again, the Holy Scriptures enjoyn us to *comfort the Feeble-minded, and support the Weak**, *to bind up the Broken-hearted, to preach Deliverance to the Captives, and set at Liberty them that are bruised*†, i. e. to shew so much Favour and Indulgence to Men of weak and tender Consciences, as to remove their groundless Fears, and raise their dejected Spirits to a Pitch of Cheerfulness and Alacrity, by preaching to them the glad Tidings of the Gospel, the Covenant of Grace, of Peace and Reconciliation with God. And doth the Spirit move them to exclude such out of God's Favour and the Light of his Countenance, by representing them as utterly lost and undone for ever, and, because they do not express such a strong (Faith I will not call it, but) Presumption as themselves, that they are God's chosen Vessels, of the Number of his Elect and sanctified Ones, to sink them down, with their severe and uncharitable Censures, to the gloomy and dismal Shades of Horror and Desperation, even to make them run beside themselves? Are this and the foregoing Instances of their Behaviour agreeable to, or consistent with, the true Genius and Temper of Christianity? Not at all. And we may say of the Spirit by which they are actuated, as St. James ‡ doth of fleshly Wisdom, *οὐκ ἐστὶν ἀνωθεν κατέρχομενον*, "it descendeth not from above."

P 3

Mr.

* 1 Thess. v. 14.

† St. Luke iv. 18.

‡ Chap. iii. 15.

Mr. Calvin, in his Comments upon *Isaiab lxi.* 1. above cited, speaks thus, "We see that every one brags of the Spirit. For the Pope, the Anabaptists, and other Hereticks and Spirits fanatical, have always the Holy Ghost in their Mouths, as if he were their Governor."

"How, or by what Means, then may we discern of him that is sent by God, and conducted by his Spirit, from him that is not? Why, if he be endued with Gifts answerable to his Charge. If he then, who is sent of God, have the Graces and Gifts which his Office requires; then hath he assuredly the Holy Ghost. But if he will take upon him the Office of a Teacher; and in the mean while is destitute both of Knowledge and Doctrine, let him be held for a Seducer."

They that would convince us that they are under the Guidance and Directions of God's Holy Spirit, let them prove it by their Works, their Fidelity and Discretion, by a conscientious and regular Discharge of that Trust which is committed to them.

If what we do proceeds from a pure disinterested Zeal for God's Honour, the Advancement and Furtherance of Religion, and the Benefit of the Church of CHRIST, by establishing the sound, and strengthening the feeble Members of it; if we testify our affectionate Regard for weak and tender Christians, and so wisely and judiciously adapt our Behaviour to them, that it may tend to their Edification, and not to their Destruction; if, when they are in any Error, be it either in Opinion, or Practice, we use all mild and

A SERMON on Whit-Sunday. 215

and christian Endeavours to reclaim them; if, when in any Diffidence or Despair, we cure their wounded Spirits with the healing Salve of consolatory Discourse, not rigidly denouncing against them the Severity of God's Judgments, which will be inflicted only upon such as obstinately persist in their Impieties, but rather shewing the Greatness of his Mercy towards those who truly and earnestly repent of them; if we bear with their Infirmities, guide and instruct their Ignorance, resolve their Doubts, dispel their Fears, and cheer and comfort their Sorrows; if, like skilful Physicians, we apply suitable Remedies to all, as their various Exigencies require, and use our most earnest and sedulous Endeavours to bring all to that Unity of Faith, that Regularity of Practice, that Agreement, Consent and Harmony which ought ever to subsist between Members of the same Body; and, if after all this, after the utmost we can do, should we prove ever so faithful and diligent in our Master's Business, in setting forward the Salvation and Welfare of Mankind, we still look upon ourselves but as unprofitable Servants, far from meriting any thing at God's Hand, yet nevertheless entertain a cheerful Hope and Confidence in God, that he will graciously accept of our sincere and honest, tho' imperfect, Endeavours of Obedience, and make them prosperous and successful; in short, if in the Course of our ministerial Labours, we express such Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness and Humility, the World will be then verily persuaded that God is in us of a Truth, there being no room to suspect a Mi-

nistry adorned and qualified with such divine and heavenly Graces, as can be looked upon as no other than the real Fruits, the genuine Offspring of the true Spirit of God.

But, if we act upon other Motives and Principles, such as Pride, or Covetousness, from a vain, ridiculous Pursuit of popular Applause, or the sordid Views of Self-interest, what we do, flows not from a good Principle, nor will be ever like to promote a good End.

But they will tell you, these Men have done good; some have been reformed by them, and prevailed upon to cast off their vicious Habits of Cursing, Swearing, Drunkenness, &c. What is the Work of Reformation to be limited to them only? Do not we use Arguments from the Pulpit to dissuade Men from these Vices as well as they? But it seems these are gifted Men; there is an uncommon Force and Energy of the Spirit that gives Success to their Doctrines; they are set off as extraordinary Teachers; and truly I am inclined to think them so too: They have signalized themselves as such by their Behaviour, which hath been very extraordinary indeed.

However, allowing this to be true, that some have been reformed by them, yet, if we consider on the other Hand, how many Thousands they may have corrupted and drawn aside, will the Reformation of those few be a sufficient Plea or Warrant for such a Practice? No: Because no accidental good Effect will justify a Procedure that hath a natural Tendency to do Mischief.

The Mischiefs, that have already ensued from their Doctrines, are too notorious and manifest to be

be denied ; and we ought to be very cautious how we trust to such Reformers again from the sad and dismal Consequents of it in the last Century, when, before that fatal and compendious Blow was given, which tended to the utter Ruin of our Constitution, and the Subversion of all Government, both in Church and State, there was just such a Set of Itinerant Preachers, who, going about under a Pretence of doing good, and gaining Profelytes to Religion, instilled such vile, seditious Principles into the Hearts of the Populace, as made them ripe for Rebellion, 'till at length the City of our *Zion* was laid waste, the Breath of our Nostrils was taken from us, and their counterfeit Scheme for Reformation ended in Anarchy and Confusion.

And why may not the same Measures produce the same Effects ? 'Tis not their talking of the Spirit will make us ever the more secure, if they are ready at all Opportunities to act contrary to the Directions of it. If Noise and Cant about the Gifts of the Spirit would make Men more spiritual and holy, there is a certain, precise, formal Sect (that seem to be much of the same Spirit with these Reformers) would be some of the greatest Saints upon Earth. And yet do we see any thing extraordinary in them above others ? Are they a whit more just and upright than their Neighbours ? Do they shew a more strict and conscientious Regard to the Rules of Equity in their common Dealing and Intercourse ? 'Tis well, if when the Vail is thrown aside, you don't find them quite the Reverse of all this.

Indeed

Indeed, were you to judge of their Temper and Disposition by the Smoothness of their Language, and the Demureness of their Looks, you would think that their very Frame and Composition was all Love and Tenderneſs. But fair Speeches, and a demure ſanctified Countenance, are many Times the Covering of a falſe and treacherous Heart. Tho' they put on never ſo friendly an Aſpect, and their Words are ſmoother than Oil, yet we may ſay of them, as did the good old Patriarch of his Son, *The Voice is Jacob's Voice, but the Hands are the Hands of Eſau.*^a The ſmoother they talk to you, the rougher will they treat you, if you are not ſtrictly upon your Guard.

They may, to prevent their being ſuſpected, and the more effectually to carry on the Cheat, pretend to an extraordinary Degree of Sanctity. They may lift up their Eyes to Heaven in Prayer, may ſob, and ſigh, and ſmite upon their Breasts, and all this devoutly to deceive you. They may now and then give ſomething to the Poor, to gain the Eſteem of Men, that, being off your Guard, through a miſtaken Opinion of their Pity and Compaſſion, you may give them the fairer Opportunity of exerciſing their Cruelty and Oppreſſion.

Now ſome, perhaps, may think that I am too ſevere and rigid in my Cenſures, and ſay, How can we tell what Principles other Men act upon, or ſet up for Judges of their Hearts?

I anſwer, not from a mere formal Devotion, a few Sighs and Tears, but from their living up ſtrictly to what they profeſs, from a due and conſcientious Regulation and Government of their Practice. And as to thoſe I have been ſpeaking of,

^a Gen. xxvii. 22.

of, I shall so far take upon me as to affirm, that neither their Devotion nor Charity can flow from a sincere Principle. For, if they did, the same Principle of Sincerity that attended their Acts of Charity and Devotion, would undoubtedly engage them to do Justice to their Neighbours.

For all the Laws of Christianity are of equal Force and Obligation, and he that knowingly and wilfully persists in the Breach and Violation of one, shews the same Contempt of the Divine Authority, as though he were guilty of all : And, though he should pretend to shew a due Respect and Obedience to that Authority in some particular Instances of Duty, and at the same Time manifests his wilful Neglect and Contempt of it in others, all his pretended Obedience and Respect would, in Reality, prove to be but Dissimulation and Hypocrisy.

But when there is an uniform and regular Consistency in a Man's Actions ; when his Obedience to the Laws of God is universal, as to his Intention and Endeavour ; when he hath such an earnest Desire of fulfilling them, as not to turn aside from them to the right Hand, or to the Left, nor wittingly fail in any one particular Instance of his Duty, when, as well as making an outward Profession of Religion, he shews such a strict Regard to the Rules of Justice and Honesty, that he'll suffer the greatest Loss, and readily forego his dearest Interest, rather than do any Thing that is base and unequitable ; 'tis plain and evident that this Man hath a right Spirit within him, is acted upon Principles of Honour, Conscience, and Religion, and, in Defiance of his most inveterate

rate Enemies; his Character will be bright and unsullied; whilst his Conduct is so unexceptionable.

Such an one is an Ornament to the Religion he professes; may be an Instrument, by his exemplary Behaviour, of turning many to Righteousness; and, for the Reward of his doing so, shall in Heaven shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and as the Stars for ever and ever.



SERMON

S E R M O N X.

Zeal for God's Church and Sanctuary,
an Inlet to Prosperity.

PSALM cxxii. Ver. 6. latter Part.

They shall prosper that love Thee.

RELIGION, as it binds us with the strictest Ties and Obligations of Duty, to perform the Will of our Great CREATOR; so is it withal so very favourable in its Institutions, as to enjoin us Nothing but what the diligent and conscientious Observance of it is, not only the Duty, but Interest of Mankind; and which we cannot more effectually promote than by testifying a due Regard to God's Church and Sanctuary, wherein the holy Offices of Religion (the divine Worship and Services) are performed in the greatest Purity and Perfection.

Such as do this are (according to the Psalmist's Assertion in my Text) entitled to a State of Happiness and Prosperity, as it is plain, if we consider

der the Occasion of these Words, which were originally wrote by *David* before the Building of the first Temple, and were afterward rehearsed by the Children of *Israel*, when the Foundation of the Second was laid by the Order and Proclamation of King *Cyrus*, upon their Deliverance from the *Babylonish* Captivity.

For tho' Mention is here made of *Jerusalem* as a City, for the Peace and Prosperity whereof they were to petition, and for which they were to testify their Affection, yet it was chiefly in Regard to the holy Temple that was to be built in it, as he declares at the last Verse of this Psalm, *Because, (says he) of the House of the LORD our GOD I will seek thy Good.* So that (as *Beza* well remarks upon the Place) "the Sanctuary was manifestly preferred before the Civil Policy."

Having thus far promised to shew you what is here represented as the proper Object of our Love, viz. the Church and Sanctuary of God, I shall now proceed, for the Confirmation of the Truth of the Doctrine in my Text, to demonstrate,

First, That such as are zealously affected to God's Church and Sanctuary, and consult the Honour and Interest of Religion, shall be in a prosperous State and Condition: Or, however it succeeds as to their outward Prosperity, they shall be happy both in this and the other World.

Secondly, To acquaint you what are the proper Expressions of this Love, and shew how we are to behave ourselves to prove the Reality of

of our Affection, the Truth and Sincerity of it.

The *first* Thing to be performed, is to demonstrate, That such as are zealously affected to God's Church and Sanctuary, and consult the Honour and Interest of Religion, shall be in a prosperous State and Condition: Or, however it succeeds as to their outward Prosperity, they shall be happy both in this and the other World.

For the Proof whereof we need not go any farther than the Example here before us. *David* was a Man after God's own Heart, and fulfilled all his Will. A Character given him from the strongest and most undeniable Testimony, even of God himself. And therefore God, who well knew the pious Dispositions of his Heart, advanced him to a State of regal Power, that by Virtue of his supreme Authority, he might promote and encourage those religious and devout Principles in others, which he had conceived in himself, and were so eminent and exemplary in his own Practice.

An Instance of this we have ^b where we read, that when the King sat in his House, and was considering what great Blessings he had received at God's Hands, in being raised from the Sheepcote to be Ruler over his People *Israel*, and that, by gaining an entire Victory over his Enemies, he enjoyed perfect Peace and Prosperity; that he should dwell in an House of Cedar, whilst the Ark of God remained under Curtains: This good Man, solicitous of making suitable Returns

^b 2 Sam. vii. 1, 2.

of Gratitude, consults with the Prophet *Nathan* about it.

And, in the Sequel of the Story we find, that, instead of spending what he had enriched himself with, from the Spoils of his Enemies, and had received from a liberal and indulgent Providence, upon Pride, Luxury and Pleasure, he (like a truly religious and gracious Prince) freely dedicates it to God, his kind and heavenly Benefactor, in preparing him an House for his Habitation, a Place for his divine Worship and Service.

He was very sensible, ('tis true) that this Building, as it was to be a Palace, not for Man, but God (be it never so stately and magnificent) could not be equal to, but must fall very short of, the transcendent Glory and Excellence of that Infinite Being, whom the Heaven, and Heaven of Heavens cannot contain. Yet, as he had set his Mind and Affection to the House of God, he laid by a Store of the choicest Materials that could be gotten, for the building of this House, and of the richest Furniture, to adorn and beautify it.

And, though God did not approve of his building it himself, as he had been a Man of War, and had shed Blood, but reserved this great Work for his Son *Solomon*; yet 'tis evident that he approved of his Design, and promised to reward him for it, by establishing his Throne upon him and his Posterity for ever.

This Promise, as it was conditionally made upon the Terms of their Obedience, from which they had prevaricated, continued no longer, as to an earthly Empire, than to the fourth Generation.

tion. Yet, nevertheless, was amply fulfilled in the Birth of our Saviour, who was of the Posterity of *David*, and whose Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, never to be abolished.

And when the Days of *David* drew nigh, that he must sleep with his Fathers, he gave a Pattern of the Building to his Son; a Model, not of his own Fancy and Invention, but by the Direction of God himself; which, as it was faithfully fulfilled in every Particular, think what a glorious Edifice this must be. The Work was long, no less than of seven Years Continuance, wrought by the most skilful and curious Artists, and, when thoroughly finished, such as became the Wonder and Admiration of all that beheld it.

Were we to read the Description of this Building, one would be apt to think that the costly Materials that were laid out upon it were enough to exhaust the Treasures of any Nation. But so far from this, that *Solomon* was the richer for it, and his Kingdom in such a flourishing Condition, that *he made Silver to be in Jerusalem as Stones, and Cedars made he as the Sycamore-Trees, that are in the Vale, for Abundance,* as we read, *1 Kings x. 27.*

Thus you see how happy it is when Kings, and such as are in Authority, endeavour to promote the Honour and Interest of Religion. It brings down a Blessing upon the Nation or Kingdom to which they belong, as in the Instance here before us. Instead of Groanings, Murmurings, and Complaining in their Streets (which is usually the Case of such as live under the Government and Administration of an arbitrary and tyrannical

ranical Oppressor) their Mouths were filled with joyful Acclamations for the Peace and Plenty which they enjoyed, incessant Praises and Thanksgivings to God for all the Goodness that he had shewed unto *David*, and to *Solomon*, and to *Israel* his People.

And, if we look forward through the whole Order and Succession of the Kings of *Judah* and *Israel*, we shall find, that, as long as they served the LORD, God made them to prosper.

Happiness and Prosperity were Things inseparable from their Obedience. As long as they paid a due Allegiance to their Maker, he would never leave them, nor forsake them.

But, when by a continued Series of their manifold Transgressions, they had stirred up his Anger, and provoked him to Jealousy with their Idols, he withdrew from them his divine Favour and Protection, and gave them up into the Hands of their Enemies; 'till at length their City was surrounded with the Army of the *Chaldeans*, who, after two Years Siege (like an impetuous Torrent) rushed in upon them, and filled them full of Horror, Misery and Confusion. Their Temple was destroyed; their Houses burnt with Fire; and such of them as escaped the Sword were led into Captivity.

She, that was great among the Nations, and a Princess among the Provinces, was now become a By-word and Proverb of Reproach, and thus continued for many Years, 'till by the Prayers of devout and holy Men, such as *Daniel*, *Exra*, and *Nebemiah*, God stirred up the Heart of *Cyrus* to release them from their Captivity, and give Orders

ders for the re-building of their Temple : Which, though it was not comparable to the First, as to the Glory and Beauty of its Structure, yet exceeded it in some Respect, in that when CHRIST, who was greater than the Temple, was exhibited, he adorned and illustrated it by his divine Presence, and the Influence of his heavenly Doctrine.

But, as his Kingdom was not of this World, he, through the Blindness and Obstinacy of the *Jews*, and Tyranny of the Emperors, not only became a Sacrifice himself, but likewise such as were listed under the Banner of a crucified Saviour, and espoused the Cause of Christianity, were to suffer Persecution.

They had no better Lot assigned them than Bonds, Imprisonment and Death, insomuch, that they were forced to shift from Place to Place, and assemble together in private, for the Exercise of religious Duties; to escape the Rage and Fury of their Persecutors.

But what of all this? they were nevertheless happy. Though they endured Hunger and Thirst, Cold and Nakedness, and the most cruel Deaths that their Enemies could inflict upon them, yet, as *St. Paul* witnesseth of himself, and the other Martyrs and Confessors. *As dying, and behold they lived; as chastened, they were not killed; as sorrowful, they always rejoiced; as poor, they were making many rich; as having Nothing, and yet they possessed all Things* : All Things that were requisite to perpetuate and compleat their Happiness.

Q 2

Though

Though the World condemned and censured them as Cheats and Impostors, yet their own Hearts did not do so; but they had something within that proclaimed an *euge* to their Souls; and when there is an individual Harmony and Agreement between a Man and his own Conscience, this will afford him a continual Feast, though in never so great Distress and Poverty, when he can reflect with Pleasure and Satisfaction upon his past Conduct, upon a virtuous and innocent (though otherwise miserable) Life, and can entertain himself with an agreeable Prospect of a future State of Happiness in Heaven, which will more than recompence all his Sufferings here upon Earth. A Happiness that consists in the Vision and Fruition of God, in whose Presence is Fulness of Joy, and at whose Right-hand there are Pleasures for evermore.

Thus far have I proceeded to demonstrate, that such as are zealously affected to God's Church and Sanctuary, and consult the Honour and Interest of Religion, shall be in a prosperous State and Condition. Or, however it succeeds as to their outward Prosperity, they shall be happy both in this and the other World.

I come now, in the *second* Place, to shew you what are the proper Expressions of this Love, and in what Manner we are to behave ourselves, to prove the Reality of our Affection, the Truth and Sincerity of it.

Now the proper Tests of our Zeal and Affection to the Church and Sanctuary of God, are these which follow:

First,

First, Purity of Faith and Doctrine.

Secondly, A due Observance of its Rites and Ceremonies.

Thirdly, Regularity of Practice, or a Life answerable to the Dignity of our Profession.

And, *lastly*, a strict Union between ourselves.

The *First* is Purity of Faith and Doctrine.

And, indeed, if we consider what is the proper Object of our Faith, the Doctrine of the holy Scriptures (especially such as our Church hath received into her Canon) what precious Truths are contained therein, and what Benefit would accrue to ourselves from our due Valuation and Esteem of them, we cannot possibly express too great a Zeal and Affection for them.

Our Saviour compares the Gospel to *an hidden Treasure*^b; to *a Pearl of great Price*^c. St Peter terms it *the Words of eternal Life*^d; St. James the *engrafted Word, which is able to save our Souls*^e; St. Paul styles it *the glad Tidings of good Things*^f; *the Gospel of Salvation*^g; *the Words of Reconciliation*^h. These are very amiable Characters and Representations of the Excellency of the Gospel, such as one would think should be sufficient to stir us up to a vigorous Defence of its saving, evangelical Truths, and make us earnestly contend for them in Point both of Interest and Duty; not only from the bare Excellency of the Things themselves, but from the solemn Engagements we are under, especially we of the Clergy, whose Office it is to preach and expound

Q 3

the

^b St. Matth. xiii. 44. ^c Ver. 46. ^d St. John v. 48.
^e St. James ii. 21. ^f Rom. x. 15. ^g Eph. i. 13. ^h 2 Cor. v. 19.

the Gospel to others, are under a more particular Obligation to do this.

For which Reason, St. Paul advises *Timothy*, Bishop of *Ephesus*, to *hold fast the Form of sound Words*¹, which Form was an Abridgment, or Summary of the Christian Doctrine, drawn up into several Articles of Faith. And this he was to adhere and stick close to; be neither tempted, nor terrified from it, by the Favours or Frowns of great Men, but maintain and vindicate it against all Opposers as sacred and inviolable; to keep that good Thing, as it is in the following Verse, which was committed to him. And, he is for having him go on in the Discharge of his episcopal Office with the utmost Caution and Fidelity. *Take heed, saith he, unto thyself, and to thy Doctrine*². As if he had said, Do Nothing which would bring a Reproach or Scandal upon either, or hinder those good and salutary Effects which thy Doctrine and Example would otherwise naturally produce. And again, *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a Workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth*.

And in his Epistle to *Titus*³, wherein he prescribes and lays down the several Duties incumbent upon a Bishop, he mentions this as one⁴, viz. that he *hold fast the faithful Word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able, by sound Doctrine, both to exhort, and to convince the Gainsayers*.

If he did not so, his Power would be so far from excusing, that it would serve rather to
con-

¹ 2 Tim. i. 13.

² 1 Tim. iv. 16.

³ 2 Tim. ii. 15.

⁴ Chap. i.

⁵ Ver. 9.

condemn him. For the higher was his Station, and the more important his Trust, the greater would his Guilt be, if he prevaricated from it.

And such as make Gain their Godliness, and broach any Doctrines for filthy Lucre's Sake, that are not analogous to the Rule of Faith, but tend to corrupt and alienate Men's Minds from the Simplicity of the Gospel, or connive at, and encourage them that do so, are to be looked upon as no Friends to our Communion, but as rotten Members of CHRIST's mystical Body, and should be cut off like luxuriant Branches from the true Vine, as fruitless and unprofitable, Enemies to the Religion they profess, and as vile Traitors as *Judas*, who sold his God for thirty Pieces of Silver.

The *second* Mark of our Zeal and Affection to the Church and Sanctuary of God, is a due Observance of its Rites and Ceremonies, which, how well they are calculated to raise in us a true Spirit of Devotion, I have already spoken of at large, under another Subject. All that I shall here say is this, that, as *St. Paul* hath enjoined, that *all Things be done decently and in Order*; and this Order and Decency cannot be preserved without some fixed and standing Rule, which we have prescribed to us by the excellent Compilers of our Liturgy, and backed with sufficient Authority to give a Sanction to it, we ought not to deviate from this Rule.

But, in the present Age we live in, we are become so much wiser than our Fore-fathers, that every Man is for putting up his own private Sentiments as a Rule of Devotion, which (in

short) is no Rule at all ; but the ready Way to bring every Thing into Disorder and Confusion.

Were this to be allowed of, farewell to all Order and Decency in the Church of God. If once we begin to yield to them, they will expect from us still further Compliances, 'till at last, we may give up the whole Rubrick, as a Thing entirely uselefs and insignificant. But such as are so very complaisant as to do this, to gratify the capricious Humours of the People, have a great deal to answer for.

For Instance, such as christen Children at Home, in the Form of publick Baptem. Whereas, no publick Office of the Church ought to be administred in any other Place than God's Temple, set a-part and consecrated for that Purpose ; unless it be in Case of an Emergency, when there is another Form prescribed, and as great a Liberty indulged as any Man can reasonably expect or desire.

A Practice this quite contrary to the Laws and Rules of our established Church, to the solemn Declaration we make at our Admission into holy Orders, that we will conform to them ; and what hath given Occasion to our Enemies to reflect upon us for thus trifling with our Laws, our Oaths, and even a Sacrament, which is an essential Part of our Religion : So that, instead of making Christians in a legal Way, we are doing what (unless timely regulated) may tend to weaken the Cause and Interest of Christianity.

But this naturally leads me to the *third* Way of testifying our Zeal and Affection to the Church and Sanctuary of God ; and that is Regularity of Practice,

Practice, or a Life answerable to the Dignity of our Profession.

This is the Crown of all, when we adorn our Profession by the Innocence and Integrity of our Lives, in all Things shewing ourselves a Pattern of good Works; that he, who is of the contrary Part, may be ashamed, having no evil Thing to say of us.

And this every one will be sure to do, that hath a sincere Regard for Religion, and endeavour, by a suitable Practice, to advance its Credit and Interest in the World.

For there is nothing that brings so much Discredit to Christianity, as the scandalous Lives of its Professors, who, whilst they should be Examples to others, as well in Conversation, as in Faith and Doctrine, give a Loose to such licentious Practices, as the very Heathens would abhor.

And what doth the ill-affected Part of Mankind infer from this? Why (though a wrong Inference it is) that there is Nothing at all in Religion; that Christians are not verily persuaded of the Truth of what they profess to believe; that it is no more than an Invention of Priestcraft, a Tool of Policy, to promote and carry on some secular Views, when (like the hypocritical *Scribes* and *Pharisees*) they say, and do not, are forward to recommend religious Duties to others, and, at the same Time, are grossly negligent themselves of the Performance of them.

The only sure Evidence of the Truth and Sincerity of our Faith is, when it manifests itself by the genuine Fruits of Obedience, and the
Exercise

234 *Zeal for GOD's Church and Sanctuary,*

Exercise of moral and social Virtues, such as Love, Joy, Long-suffering, Patience, Meekness, an universal Benevolence, and peaceable Temper and Disposition of Mind ; which make for the Good and Benefit of every individual Member of our Communion, and for the Conservation of the whole.

Which brings me to the *fourth* and *last* Testimony of our Zeal and Affection to GOD's Church and Sanctuary, *viz.* a strict Union between Ourselves.

Union is the Strength and Interest of every Society, especially of a religious one ; which, as it is to stem the Tide against the Corruptions of human Nature, had need be well fortified and prepared to repel the vigorous Opposition that is made against it.

To which End, nothing is more effectual than mutual Harmony and Agreement.

The Psalmist, when he would set forth the Strength and Impregnability of *Zion*, or *Jerusalem*, represents it as a City that *is compact together* ; or (as it is in the other Translation) that *is at Unity in itself*.

We ought (like *Scyllurus's* Sheaf of Arrows) to be cemented together with the strictest Ties of Love and Unanimity, that we may be well able to withstand the Assaults and Batteries that surround us on every Side.

For here we have Satan with the whole Train of his Artillery, his wicked Agents and Instruments upon Earth, to lay Siege to our Fortrefs. And, to prevent its being stormed, we must behave with the utmost Care, Vigilance and Circum-

cumspection, not only in keeping up a strict Harmony between ourselves, but likewise in having a particular Eye upon them, as the greatest Enemies to our Constitution, that by their intestine Divisions, are for making any Breach in it, and betraying it to those without the Walls.

And, if so, what Mark of Infamy should be set upon those treacherous and unnatural Sons, that viperous Race, who, when they have been nourished and brought up in the Communion of our Church, prey upon their Mother's Vitals, rend and tear her precious Body in Pieces, by not only separating from her themselves, but likewise, tempting and seducing others to do the same; and, instead of feeding CHRIST's Flock with wholesome Nutriment, the sincere Milk of the Word, strive to corrupt and poison them with their schismatical and pernicious Doctrines.

I heartily wish that such a flagrant Instance of Prevarication would meet with proper Notice from our Legislature, to lay hold on, and check this growing Evil, to stop it in its impetuous Career; and (methinks) our seeing them so indefatigable as they are in doing Mischief, should animate our Zeal and Resolution to maintain the righteous Cause in which we are engaged.

But, as whatever we can do would prove ineffectual without God's Blessing attending it, let us (according to the Advice of the Psalmist in the Words immediately preceding my Text) *pray for the Peace of Jerusalem*. Let us implore the Aid and Assistance of the Almighty,
that

236 *Zeal for God's Church and Sanctuary, &c.*

that he would vouchsafe her his divine Protection, and keep this spiritual Fabrick secure, and steadily fixed upon her own Base, against all the Assaults and intended Invasions of her Enemies.

Thus firmly cemented in our Endeavours to suppress Vice and Immorality, and promote the Cause and Interest of Religion, in Time we might, from the lowest Sink of Degeneracy and Corruption, by the gradual Increase of our Virtues, become a renowned Nation, and a Praise in the Earth.

And as for our Church, so well guarded by the Purity of our Faith, by the Regularity of our Practice, and our united Endeavours to defend her, no Weapon that is formed against her should prosper, not all the confederate Forces of Men or Devils should have any Advantage of her, nor the Gates of Hell be ever able to prevail against her. But she should flourish, yea, for ever flourish, amidst all the Oppositions of such as are evil Wishers to our Zion, and seek to destroy her Prosperity and Peace.

O LORD, we beseech thee, let thy continual Pity cleanse and defend thy Church; and because it cannot continue in Safety without thy Succour, preserve it evermore by thy Help and Goodness, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD, to whom, &c.

DECI

F I N I S.



E R R A T A.

PAGE 6. Line 24. for even *read* won; p. 16. l. 30. for expref-
 sed or done, *put done* before expressed; l. 13. for Impressions
read Expressions; p. 22. l. ult. for Pain, *read* Ruin; p. 24. l. 31.
 for incorrigable, *read* incorrigible; p. 31. l. 13. for speedy, *read*
 steady; p. 32. l. 8. for Conversation, *read* Conversion; p. 38. l.
 11. for infatuate, *read* infatuated; p. 39. l. 31. for their own, *read*
 our own; p. 50. l. 10. a Comma at lasting; p. 70. l. 14. for Ir-
 ruptions, *read* Irreptions; p. 46. l. 13. for unweary, *read* unwary;
 p. 48. l. 25. for injoying, *read* enjoying; p. 57. l. 21. for with-
 oldeth, *read* with-holdeth, p. 68. l. 11. for perfect, *read* perfectly;
 p. 100. l. 22. for their own, *read* your own; p. 108 l. 12. for sub-
 vident, *read* subservient; p. 126. l. 6. for great, *read* greatest; p.
 132. l. 23. for Lillies, *read* Lilies; p. 140. l. 5. for tell, *read* tells;
 l. 18. for wonder, *read* wander; p. 150. l. 32. a Comma at had
 not; p. 151. l. 26. that *after* confider, p. 163. l. 32. for Angels,
read Angel; p. 174. l. 24. for Θεαυθρον for Θεαυθρον; p.
 114. l. 20. a Comma at with me, p. 119. l. 23. for the earnest,
read your earnest; p. 122. l. 19. for the Redemption, *read* your
 Redemption; l. 21. drink *after* yea; p. 182. l. 5. for certainty of
 such, *read* Certainty of the Deliverance of such; l. 30. a Semi-
 colon at live; p. 184. l. 24. for Command, *read* Commands; p.
 186. l. 16. Accents left out over την and σην; p. 187. l. 28. for
 of Vanities, *read* the Vanities; p. 188 l. 15. for shall, *read* shalt;
 l. 23. for take, *read* takes; p. 191 l. 23. for washed, *read* wasted;
 p. 192. l. 19. for excel, *read* exert; p. 200. l. 7. for sharper, *read*
 sharpest; l. 25. for corporeal, *read* corporal; p. 201. l. 30. for
 more, *read* most; p. 207. l. 20. for ingenious, *read* ingenuous; p.
 190. l. 4. for Counties, *read* Countries; l. 20 for Conception,
read Conceptions; p. 202. l. ult. *read* eternal and glorious; p. 222
 l. 18. for promised, *read* premised; p. 173. l. 3. for thus, *read*
 this; p. 159. l. 21. for Sense, *read* Scene; p. 160. l. 1. Comma
 at another.

